A FABULOUS VISIT WITH EC'S WEIRD FANTASY

COMIC BOOKS

COMICS FEATURE™

NUMBER 49
NOV. 1986
48432
$2.25
$2.75 Canada
L1.95 UK DGS

THE LEGENDS REBORN:
FRANK MILLER'S
DARK KNIGHT
JOHN BYRNE'S
MAN OF STEEL
THE COMPLETE INSIDE STORY

THE SMALLEST, AND BIGGEST SUPERHERO
(GI)ANT-MAN

THE STORY OF PRIME TIME
CARTOONS

ROY THOMAS REMEMBERS THE WAR YEARS
SUPERMAN

STEVE PERRIN SUGGESTS HOW TO PLAY
SUPERHERO GAMES

MIKE BENTON'S HOTTEST NEW ADVICE ON
MAKING MONEY IN COMICS

11
0 71896 48432 8

HAPPY HAL'S HOWLINGS

There's a hopefully exciting piece of news for all of the diehard **COMICS FEATURE** readers that have been begging that more attention be paid to the comic book companies other than Marvel and DC. The millions (Joe and Linda, and their kid Arnie) who have been complaining that too much attention is paid to the big two, particularly Marvel, at the expense of the little guys are about to get their wish. Beginning next issue, our special anniversary number, we will begin a brand new magazine-within-a-magazine devoted to the score or so of independent publishers. It'll be called **INDEPENDENT LINE** and feature only information devoted to the smaller publishers, particularly those that do not venture forth beyond the confines of the specialty market. **COMICS FEATURE** readers who buy in the direct market should find this new column particularly interesting, but even those who do not normally encounter the books are probably dying of curiousity. Or so the publishers of the books tell me! And, I must admit that a number of fans have spoken or written to me to convey their interest in this type of material. So I'll give it a shot. The new section will be introduced next time although we do certainly deserve the right to keep tinkering with it for a while to come, so do let us know what you think works with it and what changes you would suggest. Of course, that goes for the rest of the magazine too!

The new section will offer the latest news about the independent books and the people who labor on them, a brief interview/overview of an interesting title, and a list of upcoming books. Unfortunately to make room for the new section we had to make some adjustment in the old. So beginning with that issue both the Golden Age and the Stri Search columns will become bi-monthly, alternating with each other. Ron Goulart will continue in his bailiwick as will Roy Thomas with his special love. No columns or features or departments will be dropped. Sort of the best of both worlds, no?

And speaking of special issues, don't dare miss our upcoming 50th anniversary. You will be absolutely amazed at some of the features we have lined up and the myriad top talents in the field that will be making a guest appearance. Take Happy Hal's word for it—don't miss this one!

—Happy Hal

COMICS FEATURE

NUMBER 49 NOVEMBER 1986

COLUMNS

FUN & PROFIT
Mike Benton looks forward to the year 2006 and helps you choose which of today's comics will be the big winners. Plus a few tips.
12

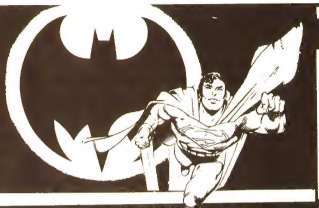
HEROES
Will Murray fills in for James Van Hise by telling the story of Marvel's smallest, and largest hero!
16

ANIMATED ANTICS
The prime time cartoons—the story of a time when men shared the airwaves with bunny rabbits, chipmunks and fat cavemen told by Michael Eury. Filling in for James Van Hise.
22

GOLDEN AGE
Roy Thomas, the master of the golden age hero, finishes his wartime coverage of the Man of Steel.
38

GAMES
Taking a break from creating his own games, Steve Perrin offers some tips to gamemasters, checks in on Heroes and points out a few choice items.
42

BEFORE THE SILVER AGE
Initiating a brand new irregular column, James Van Hise looks back at one of comicdom's finest hours, the EC Revolution. This time he examines Weird Fantasy in loving detail! So that's where Van Hise has been.
48



FEATURES

THE LEGENDS REBORN
FRANK MILLER'S DARK KNIGHT & JOHN BYRNE'S MAN OF STEEL

For decades Superman and Batman were the most popular superheroes of the comic book world. They thrilled generations of readers, maintaining their place at the head of the pack, until the late '60s when under the burden of a multitude of encumberments, their glory began to fade.

But there was a good reason that the superpowered alien protector from beyond the stars and the the night-stalking vigilante of the dark alleyways had been so popular for so long. And two of the four color world's top talents are diligantly working at removing the barnacles and polishing up the legend. We are proud to present the whole story of Frank Miller's Batman and John Byrne's Superman!

26

COVER CHARACTERS COPYRIGHT DC COMICS COVER ARTWORK BY FRANK MILLER (BATMAN ROBIN) AND JOHN BYRNE (SUPERMAN).

DEPARTMENTS

HAL'S HOWLINGS!
2

FEATURE NEWS
4

LETTERS
6

LISTINGS
8

STAFF

Hal Schuster
Editor & Publisher

Jim Keegan
Ruth Kennedy
Art Directors

Ron Goulart
James Van Hise
John Peel
Contributing Editors

Mike Benton
Ron Goulart
Will Murray
Steve Perrin
Roy Thomas
James Van Hise
Columnists

Martin Cannon
Cover Artist

Jack Schuster
Resident Superhero

TYPESETTER
LAURIE DEATON

Comics Feature is published monthly by Movieland Publishing, Inc., 6399 Topanga Canyon Boulevard, Suite 210, Canoga Park, CA 91304. This issue, number 49, November 1986, content is copyright 1986 Movieland Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprint or reproduction in part or in whole without written permission is strictly forbidden. *Comics Feature* accepts no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, photos, art or other materials, but if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope, they will be seriously considered and, if necessary, returned. Products advertised are not necessarily endorsed by *Comics Feature* and any views expressed in editorial copy are not necessarily those of *Comics Feature*. Subscription rates $29.95 for twelve (12) issues in the United States and Canada, $34.95 foreign, in U.S. funds only. Printed in Canada. Published under license from Hal Schuster.

FEATURE NEWS

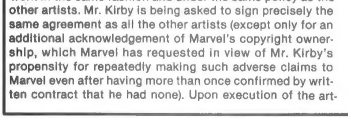
THE MARVEL/KIRBY DISPUTE CONTINUES

The dispute between Marvel Comics and artist Jack Kirby over the return of his artwork took a new turn this month when Marvel issued an official statement of their position and where things stand at the moment. The first half of the statement outlines the background of the dispute and that the reason they had required Kirby to sign a longer release form in order to obtain his art was because of his repeated public statements regarding certain claims he'd allegedly made regarding various Marvel characters.

The last part of Marvel's statement states:

"Recently, however, Mr. Kirby, through his attorneys, expressed his willingness to acknowledge the propriety of Marvel's copyright ownership in the artwork and underlying characters. Accordingly, Marvel sent to Mr. Kirby's attorneys, weeks ago, the standard artwork release form which has been signed, without objection or change, by each of the other artists who has received original Marvel artwork. Marvel has guaranteed in writing that Mr. Kirby will be treated no differently than the other artists who are receiving artwork from Marvel. Mr. Kirby will receive artwork in the same fashion and under the same policy as the other artists. Mr. Kirby is being asked to sign precisely the same agreement as all the other artists (except only for an additional acknowledgement of Marvel's copyright ownership, which Marvel has requested in view of Mr. Kirby's propensity for repeatedly making such adverse claims to Marvel even after having more than once confirmed by written contract that he had none). Upon execution of the artwork release form by Mr. Kirby and its return to Marvel (and upon Mr. Kirby's execution of the attached acknowledgement) Marvel will arrange for delivery of the artwork it has processed.

"Mr. Kirby has not yet signed the artwork release form. He has insisted upon a special "condition" before he will sign the artwork release form and accompanying acknowledgement of Marvel's copyright ownership, specifically that in any statement as to character creatorship by Marvel and Marvel's licensees Mr. Kirby be given credit as sole creator of certain of Marvel's characters, including Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four and the Hulk. Marvel realizes that the creatorship question is a sensitive one, not only to Mr. Kirby, but also to the other creative people involved, and Marvel is not prepared to accede to Kirby's demand that he be credited as *sole* creator in cases where it is not justified. Marvel has been and continues to be willing to discuss this matter with Mr. Kirby and to take whatever steps are reasonably appropriate to assure that, if creatorship credit is given on Marvel publications and future third party projects, it is stated accurately. Marvel believes this is a separate issue having nothing to do with the artwork release and is willing to resolve this matter with Jack Kirby separately. Were it not for Mr. Kirby's insistence on resolving this issue at the same time, the distribution of Mr. Kirby's artwork could commence almost immediately. In any event, Marvel is hopeful that these matters will be resolved shortly."



SPIDERMAN VS. WOLVERINE

Spiderman Vs. Wolverine, a one-shot special issue shipping October 21, features the return of a mysterious figure from Wolverine's espionage days, and involves the web-slinger in a tangle of international intrigue.

Written by Jim Owsley, penciled by Mark Bright and inked by Al Williamson, the story introduces Charlemagne, one of the world's deadliest assassins and a member of an espionage group that once included Logan (Wolverine).

"Many years after their last mission together, members of the group are being killed, one-by-one, and Charlemagne mysteriously re-appears on the scene," Owsley explains. "Wolverine becomes involved when Charlemagne contacts him."

Spider-Man becomes involved when a *Daily Bugle* reporter makes the connection between the espionage team and the rash of assassinations. The reporter and Peter Parker are sent to Berlin to cover the story. The issue takes place entirely in that city.

"Wolverine, fresh from the mutant massacre in New York and very paranoid, spots Spider-Man by his scent," Owsley says. "He confronts Parker and the two end up fighting."

In the course of the tale, Spider-Man will discover how far removed the world of espionage is from his experiences in New York crime fighting. "He'll discover how inadequate his past has been to prepare him for the world of intrigue."

Spider-Man Vs. Wolverine will take place following the "mutant massacre" storyline in **X-Men**, **X-Factor**, **Thor**, **The New Mutants** and **Power Pack**. It will tie in closely with a major continuity development in **The Amazing Spider-Man**. The 64-page special will be priced at $2.50.

BOB LAYTON TO REJOIN DAVID MICHELINIE ON IRON MAN

Beginning with **Iron Man** 215, Bob Layton will once again team-up with David Michelinie to chronicle the adventures of the armored Avenger, providing inks for series penciler Mark Bright.

"With Bob as inker, **Iron Man** will once again have the strong creative team the character deserves," editor Mark Gruenwald states. "David, Mark and Bob are turning in some spectacular material, completely re-establishing Iron Man as one of Marvel's premier heroes."

According to David Michelinie, he and Bob fell right back into the creative collaboration that had helped revitalize the series during their first stint. "It had been a long time, and we weren't sure how it would all come together," he adds. "But when Mark (Bright), Bob, Mark (Gruenwald) and I got together for our first story conference, everything clicked perfectly."

Michelinie, Bright and Layton will begin to re-establish the character of Tony Stark as well as his armored alter-ego. They will build a new cast of characters, and issue 215 will feature the first good look at the new California location of the Stark Enterprises home office. Also in that issue, A.I.M. will launch a full scale assault on Tony Stark's space station. Both Stark and Rhodey don armor to defend it, and the issue will end with a cliffhanger that may lead to the death of Jim Rhodes.

LEGENDS™

ON SALE IN:

AUGUST
- ☐ BATMAN 401
- ☐ DETECTIVE 568
- ☐ LEGENDS 1

SEPTEMBER
- ☐ GL CORPS 207
- ☐ LEGENDS 2
- ☐ COSMIC BOY 1*

OCTOBER
- ☐ JLA 258
- ☐ SECRET ORIGINS 10
- ☐ FIRESTORM 55
- ☐ LEGENDS 3
- ☐ COSMIC BOY 2*

NOVEMBER
- ☐ BLUE BEETLE 9
- ☐ JLA 259
- ☐ FIRESTORM 56
- ☐ WARLORD 114
- ☐ LEGENDS 4
- ☐ COSMIC BOY 3*

DECEMBER
- ☐ JLA 260
- ☐ ACTION 586
- ☐ SUPERMAN 3
- ☐ ADV. OF SUPERMAN 426
- ☐ WARLORD 115
- ☐ BLUE BEETLE 10
- ☐ LEGENDS 5
- ☐ COSMIC BOY 4*

JANUARY '87
- ☐ JLA 261
- ☐ LEGENDS 6

FEBRUARY '87
- ☐ JUSTICE LEAGUE 1*
- ☐ SECRET ORIGINS 14

COMING SOON
- ☐ FLASH 1*
- ☐ SUICIDE SQUAD 1*

*Indicates spin-offs

THE LEGENDS BEGIN

The role of the super-hero in contemporary society undergoes intellectual and physical debate in the monumental **Legends** series according to DC Comics. Starring 22 heroes, 10 villains, 3 superhero teams, and 2 demigods, **Legends** involves death, destruction and, ultimately, reformation as the DC Universe enters a new phase.

Through the six monthly issues of **Legends**, Darkseid tries to destroy the legend of superheroes to unleash chaos into the world. Counter-balancing his efforts is the Phantom Stranger, who is convinced that man is inherently good, with or without superheroes. The debate rages throughout the series and ties in with no less than 17 comics in the DC Comics line. Each tie in will be prominently marked. **(See sidebar for a list of which books are involved.)**

In addition, four new series will spin off from the **Legends** series. **Cosmic Boy**, a four-issue mini-series, begins in September, just after the second issue of **Legends**. It runs four monthly issues, culminating just prior to **Legends 6**, the final issue in this epic across-the-line crossover series. Upon completion of the entire **Legends** series, three new ongoing titles will be launched. They are a re-vitalized **Justice League**, a new **Flash** and the return of the **Suicide Squad**.

LETTERS

Send all comments and correspondence to:
COMICS FEATURE
8399 Topanga Canyon Blvd.
Suite 210
Canoga Park, CA 91304

Dear Comics Feature,
Thank you for publishing Will Murray's Silver Age in **CF 46** on Gorgo and Konga, "Charlton's Fantastic Giants." These were among my favorite titles published in the 1960s. I know superheroes are the rage nowadays, but I still prefer the old monster stories. It's great to see 2 of my favorites get the attention they deserve.

However, I must take exception to Murray's description of Gorgo as a "second rate Godzilla." In movie form, I thought Gorgo was superior to all but the original Godzilla movie. As for comparing the representative comic series, one must remember that Godzilla came later.
Peter B. Hull
P.O. Box 154
Moreland, ID 83256

Peter—I believe that when Will is commenting on the second-rate status, and you must admit it takes some courage to call someone the size of Gorgo second rate!, he is referring to the movie, which even you agree doesn't stand up to the original Godzilla—Helpful Hal

Dear Hal,
I'm writing in regards to **C.F. 46**, specifically concerning your feature on the FF and the accompanying piece on John Buscema and his pencils!

Like yourself, I'm a big fan of John Buscema and his work, and as a would-be comic book artist, he's been my main influence for years! So, when you mentioned last issue that you were going to run an article on the new creative team on the FF, I was looking forward to it! And here's my complaint after the blurb on the front cover and turning the pages to find J.B.'s pencils, all I find waiting for me is one hero shot and two other panels! The reason I was a little peeved was because in **C.F. 42** on Alpha Flight you featured two full pages plus another ½ page of two pencilled pages of David Ross' work. I liked seeing his pencilled pages and was anticipating the same treatment for John's work. Alas, it was not to be!

I do want to thank you for your interview with John Buscema. Of all the major zines, yours is the only one that has interviewed him! I've read umpteen interviews with the latest "fan favorites," while a *great proven talent* like John is ignored by the fan press!

Owen O'Leary
6955 Fielding, No. 608
Montreal, Quebec
Canada H4V 1P3

Owen—I am glad that you enjoyed our brief visit with Big John and heartily agree with you that he deserves the attention. As to your complaint—I don't think that you understand the problem. We don't decide to run more of one and less of another artist's work when we are profiling them, but simply find ourselves at the mercy of what we are sent. If we had had more to run, we would have run it!—Happy Hal

Dear CF,
This is the first time I've ever written to you so this is going to be a bit hard. First I'd like to say that although I've only bought two issues of this magazine, it is already my favorite. "Stan Lee Sounds Off" must be my favorite. Games is also extremely excellent. But now that you've written the good parts and the bad parts about each roll playing game, couldn't you give a few suggestions on how to make these improvements?

Another good article in issue 40 was the exclusive look into Spider-Man's future. It was well written and well though out. But doesn't that ruin the suspense for all the Spider-Man readers? I know that not everybody likes the suspense, but I sure do. But since you've done one for Spider-Man, couldn't you do one for Captain America?

One more question. I would like to know if all the letters are read, not just the first you receive that quite possibly are the ones that get on the Letters page.
Till Captain America gets frozen again,
Faithfully Yours,
Brian Berman
3208 Adams Ct.
Fairfax, VA 22030

Brian—This letter came with a note from Brian's mother that although he is only 12, he both wrote and typed this letter. I am not sure why we should do Captain America and spoil it for everybody if you're complaining about our coverage of Spider-Man. We will be doing the job for the ol' flag waver in two issues though, along with his old Tales of Suspense crony, Iron Man. As you can certainly see, the gaming column has begun to offer tips and even games! And yes, we do read all of our mail.—Happy Hal

SCORECARD

In the interests of best serving our readers and as a tribute to the greatest editor that ever lived—in Happy Hal's opinion at least!—John Campbell, we are launching a new feature with this issue. Years ago, in **Astounding/Analog** magazine, which he edited so brilliantly for so many years, Campbell asked his readers to rate the contents of his magazine in the order in which they enjoyed them, from most favorite to least, and published the results. This served to give him a guide as to which types of material to most pursue and helped to let the writers know how well the readers thought they were doing. So, in the interests of originality—or, if an idea's good why not steal it!—we will begin doing that in **COMICS FEATURE**. Again, there is no prize for this, but you can be a real help to Ol' Happy Hal and have a real voice in picking the contents of your favorite magazine! And why not give the writers you most enjoy something of a boost as well? So here's how this one works:

Each issue we'll list the contents of the mag (features, columns and departments) on the contents page—where else?—and you simply jot them down on a letter or postcard with a number next to them, ranking them in the order in which you most enjoyed them—for example: Happy Hal's Howlings, number one! As soon as these begin to roll in, which should start with the ratings for the contents of this issue, we will rank the articles in order of your preference and print the results on the letters page each issue. We will use this information as one of the factors in selecting the contents of future issues. I must warn you that while this information will be very important in choosing what appears in **COMICS FEATURE**, it will not be the sole factor. Sometimes a piece or type of material is simply too important not to run and even though we know it will not find favor with most of our readers we will run it anyway. But—don't worry—we will make sure that you love most of what is in each issue. Fair? We're not stupid and do know that we have to keep our readers happy!

Dear Folks:

I am writing to tell you how much I appreciated your March 1986 issue. There were a number of articles in it to treasure.

The piece on **Alpha Flight** by James Van Hise was well-written and informative. I was happy to read of Bill Mantlo's plans to turn the team back into the close-knit unit they were meant to be originally, and his attempts to explore how Alpha Flight and Canada relate to the rest of the world. Also, I enjoyed seeing the excellent artwork of the team's new artist, Dave Ross. His high regard for the characters is evident in both his pencils and his curiosity about their personal lives. (It will be interesting to see his input into the stories). Speaking of which, I appreciated your printing Carl Pott's revelations of what will be in store for the Canadian heroes, and will be eagerly anticipating the stories as well as the exciting art you ran. Your coverage of the new **Alpha Flight** creative team's plans was outstanding, and it really made my day to read it!

I also appreciated the article on writing comics by Stan Lee. This is an area of comics creation that could use a little more attention. When I attended a comic-book panel at the Museum of Cartoon Art's Marvel Day last summer, I brought up the question of where to find information on writing for comic books. The panel, consisting of Carl Potts, Louise Simonson, Walter Simonson and Chris Claremont, could think of no schools or courses which teach writing for comics, but they did come up with some useful suggestions. Chris Claremont suggested reading literature other than comic books or science fiction to get a wider background as a writer (he suggested James Joyce and Salinger, among other writers). And Louise Simonson kindly recommended the following books: **Screenplay** by Sid Field, **Writing to Sell** by Scott Meredith, and **Writing in General and the Short Story in Particular** by Rust Hill. However, the consensus of opinion seemed to be that it is easier to find books on how to **draw** comics than on how to **write** them, possibly because comics are mainly **visual** story-telling. That is why I was glad to see the piece on comics written by Stan Lee. Considering the paucity of information available on how to write for comic books, any article printed on this subject is welcome!

Finally, I enjoyed the **Bugs Bunny** featuring Ray Bradbury's interview with Chuck Jones. It really was fun to read and proved what a well-rounded magazine **COMICS FEATURE** is, covering animation as well as comics. As a matter of fact, I think **COMICS FEATURE** is wonderful, and I'll be looking forward to more of your thorough and excellent coverage of all comics issues.

Sincerely
Sue Crawbuck

Comics Consumer Guide

DC 9/9/86 SHIPPING

☐ANGEL LOVE 6 —
(Barbara Slate) Angel searches for her long-lost sister.

☐DEMON 1 —
(W-P by Wagner/Nichols) Jason and Glinda search for the Demon's secret in an ancient manuscript.

☐FURY OF FIRESTORM 35 —
(LEGENDS crossover) (P by Brozowski/I by Mitchell)

☐HEX 17 —
Fleisher/Giffen/Garzon)

☐JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA 258 —
(LEGENDS crossover) (Dematteis/McDonnell/B. Smith) "The end of the JLA" This four-part series tells it all.

☐THE OUTSIDERS 15 —
(Barr/Jurgens) Direct sales only.

☐TALES OF THE TEEN TITANS 73—
(Wolfman/Barreto/Tanghal) Reprint.

☐WATCHMEN 5 —
(Moore/P-I-C by Gibbons) The hero killer strikes again as Rorschach goes berserk! Direct sales only.

☐VIGILANTE 37 —
(Kupperberg/Smith/Magyar/Grell) Direct sales only. The Peacemaker is after the Vigilante!

9/16/86 SHIPPING

☐BATMAN 403 —
(Max Allan Collins/Cowan) Wayne's benevolence backfires when a madman discovers the Batcave.

☐BLUE BEETLE 8 —
(Wein/P-C by Cullins/I-C by Patterson) CHRONOS hits Chicago.

☐ELECTRIC WARRIOR 9 —
(Moench/P-C by Balkie) Direct sales only.

☐ELVIRA'S HOUSE OF MYSTERY 11 —
(C by Stevens) Double-sized last issue.

☐G.I. COMBAT 267 —
(Kanigher/P-I Glanzman/Kubert)

☐LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES 30 —
(Levitz/LaRocque/DeCarlo/Lightle) *Brainy's Lucky Day* turns out to be someone else's worst. Direct sales only.

☐SECRET ORIGINS 10 —
(LEGENDS crossover) (Moore/Levitz/Barr/Mishkin/Morrow/Lopez/Aparo/Colon/C by Aparo) Four versions of the most elusive secret origin of all — that of the Phantom Stranger

☐STAR TREK 34 —
(Wein/Sutton/Villagran/Brozowski&Smith) Beginning a three-part story.

☐SUPERMAN 1 —
(W-P by Byrne/I-) Introducing Metallo — The man with the Kryptonite heart.

9/23/86 Shipping

☐ADVENTURES OF THE OUTSIDERS 41 —
(Barr/P-I by Aparo)

☐ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN 424 —
(Wolfman/Ordway/Machlan) 1st new issue — The Man of Steel battles the multi-faceted Man O'War! Plus — Tragedy strikes the Lane family!

☐BOOSTER GOLD 12 —
(W-P-C by Jurgens/I-C DeCarlo)

☐GREEN LANTERN CORPS. 206 —
(Englehart/P-C by Staton/Farmer/Patterson) The biggest bad guys of them all — the Commies!!

☐INFINITY, INC. 34 —
(Roy & Dann Thomas/P-C by McFarlane/I-C by DeZuniga) Guest starring the Global Guardians. Direct sales only.

☐SWAMP THING 56 —
(Moore/Veitch/Alcala/Bissette) Swamp Thing begins an odyssey through the cosmos.

☐THE NEW TEEN TITANS 27 —
(Wolfman/Barreto/Tanghal) The search for Nightwing and Raven begins. Direct sales only.

☐WARLORD 113 —
(Fleisher/P-I by Randall/Grindberg & Randall)

☐WHO'S WHO 23 —

9/30/86 SHIPPING

☐ACTION 584 —
(P-C by John Byrne/Dick Giordano) Superman's losing control of his body — and the New Teen Titans are going to pay the price for it.

☐ALL-STAR SQUADRON 65 —
(Thomas/Heck/DeZuniga) *The Origin of Johnny Quick*

☐COSMIC BOY 2 —
(Levitz/Giffen/P-C Colon)

☐DARK KNIGHT HARD COVER ALBUM —
(Miller/Janson/Varley) Reprinting the entire saga, with slight corrections and additional material.

☐DETECTIVE 570 —
(Barr/Davis/Neary) The Catwoman turns back to evil. Is this the Joker's final triumph?

☐HAWKMAN 6 —
(Isabella/P-C by Howell/I-C by Heck) Lionmane on the loose. Hawkman near death, Hawkwoman fights alone, plus, The Return of the Gentleman Ghost.

☐LEGENDS 3—
(Ostrander & Wein/P-C by Byrne/Kesel) Superman squares off against the President of the United States as we meet — The Suicide Squad.

10/7/86 SHIPPING

☐HISTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE 1 —
(Wolfman/P-C by Perez.I-C by Kesel) From the Dawn of Time through the WWII — the people and events that shaped the DC Universe. Direct sales only.

☐TALES OF THE LEGION 343 —
(Bates/Cockrum)

☐TEEN TITANS SPOTLIGHT 6—
(Wolfman/Andru/Jensen/Cowan) Concluding the four-parter.

MARVEL

9/2/86 SHIPPING

☐CLOAK & DAGGER 10 —
(Mantlo/Blevins/Austin/Cover by Blevins) Doctor Doom.

☐DAREDEVIL 236 —
(Nocenti/S. Buscema) Featuring Sabretooth. Note: Ties in with Mutant Massacre storyline in X-MEN/X-FACTOR.

☐NEW MUTANTS 47 —
(Claremont/Guice/Baker/Cover by Windsor-Smith) Guest starring X-Men, Morlocks and the villain Magus. Magus, Warlock's father, chases the New Mutants through time and space to 14th Century Scotland.

☐NIGHT MASK 3 —
(Goodwin/Salmons)

☐PSI FORCE 3 —
(Perry/Texeira/Baker)

☐STRIKEFORCE: MORITURI 2 —
(Gillis/Anderson/Williams)

☐TRANSFORMER MOVIE 2—
(Of 3) (Macchio/Perlin/Akin & Garvey)

☐WEB OF SPIDER-MAN 22 —
(Michelinie/Silvestri) Concluding Spidey's Ireland adventure.

☐CONAN THE KING 38 —
(Kraar/Hunt & Manley/Nichols/Cover by Hunt/Nichols)

☐WEST COAST AVENGERS 16—
(Englehart/Milgrom/Sinnott) The return of Hellcat and the Son of Satan.

☐X-MEN ANNUAL 10 —
(Claremont/Art by Art Adams and Terry Austin) The X-Men are getting younger.

☐MEPHISTO VS. FOUR HEROES 1 —
(Of 4) First of four issue series pitting the Lord of Evil successively against Thor, the X-Men, X-Factor and, in this issue, the Fantastic Four.

☐THE KINGPIN —

(Frank Miller and Bill Sienkiewicz). Daredevil against the Kingpin. Graphic Novel.

9/9/86 SHIPPING

☐ALPHA FLIGHT 42 —
(Mantlo/Ross/Protacio) A Beta Flight member is voted into Alpha Flight.

☐AMAZING SPIDER-MAN 284 —
(DeFalco/Frenz) Guest starring Hobgoblin, Jack O'Lantern, Rose, Silver Sable and the Punisher, as a major war breaks out in the Kingpin's absence.

☐CAPTAIN AMERICA 325 —
(Gruenwald/Neary/Beatty)

☐KICKERS, INC. 3 —
(DeFalco/Frenz) *Witches of Westchester.* The Kickers are called into battle accidentally unleashed ghosts on a college campus.

☐GI JOE VS. TRANSFORMERS 1—
(Of 4) (Higgins/Trimpe)

☐LABYRINTH 3 —
(Jacobson/J. Buscema/Tanghal)

☐MERC 3 —
(David/Morrow) Hazzard faces Arab terrorists in Philadelphia.

☐X-MEN INDEX 1 —

☐SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN 131 —
(Kraar/Docherty/Isherwood/Cover by Beekman) *Autumn of the Witch.* Black and White.

☐SPIDER-MAN DIGEST 1 —
Reprinting *Amazing Spider-Man* 51-53 (Lee and Romita.)

☐DRACULA GRAPHIC NOVEL—
(Written and painted by Jon Jay Muth)

9/16/86 SHIPPING

☐MARVEL AGE 46 —

☐AVENGERS 275 —
(Stern/Buscema/Palmer) Together again...Ant Man and the Wasp. Also featuring Absorbing Man and Titania.

☐CONAN THE BARBARIAN 190 —
(Owsley/Buscema/Chan/Cover by Buscema) The climax of the Warlord of Koth storyline.

☐D.P. 7 3 —
(Gruenwald/Ryan/Tanghal/Cover by Ryan)

☐G.I. JOE 55 —
(Hama/Whigham) Cobra Commander and Destro escape from the Pit.

☐HOWARD THE DUCK 2 —
(Of 3) (Fingeroth/Baker)

☐INCREDIBLE HULK 327 —
(Milgrom/Geiger/Rubinstein) The final Fate of General Thunderbolt Ross.

☐JUSTICE 3 —
(Goodwin/Isherwood) Showdown with Conquest and the Yakuza assassin, Tattoo.

☐MARVEL TALES 195 —
(Claremont/Byrne) Reprinting TEAM-UP 61, starring Spider-Man and Human Torch vs. the Super Skrull.

☐THE 'NAM 2 —
(Murray/Golden/Gil/Cover by Golden)

☐X-MEN 213 —
(Claremont/Alan Davis/Neary) The baptism of fire of Psylocke, the X-Men's newest member. Featuring the conclusion of the Mutant Massacre storyline.

☐MARVEL SAGA 14—

Guide

☐**TRANSFORMERS UNIVERSE 2 —**
(Of 4)

☐**MARVEL FANFARE 30 —**
(Nocenti/Anderson/Williamson) A full-length Moon Knight story by Nocenti and Brent Anderson. Direct sales only.

9/23/86 SHIPPING

☐**FANTASTIC FOUR 298 —**
(Stern/John Buscema/Sal Buscema)

☐**IRON MAN 214 —**
(Fingeroth/Morgan) Guest starring Spider-Woman.

☐**PETER PARKER 122 —**
(David/Beachum) This issue features the Hobgoblin and Dakota North.

☐**SPITFIRE 4 —**
(Conway/Trimpe/Sinnott)

☐**STAR BRAND 4 —**
(Shooter/Romita, Jr.) Introducing Hysteria, Tantrum, and Scrunch, several paranormals who will subsequently appear in D.P. 7.

☐**THOR 375 —**
(Simonson/S. Buscema/Cover by Simonson) Featuring a host of villains such as Loki, Hela, Absorbing Man Man-Beast and Wrecker,

☐**TRANSFORMERS 24 —**
(Budiansky/Perlin/Akin & Garvey/Cover by Trimpe)

☐**X-FACTOR 12 —**
(L. Simonson/Silvestri) Continuing the changes in Angel as he must decide whether to keep his wings.

☐**CLASSIC X-MEN 5 —**
(Cover by Art Adams) 15 pages of new material, reprinting *My Brother, My Enemy* by Claremont and Cockrum with 3 new pages drawn by Cockrum. Plus 12 pages of story illustrated by John Bolton, spotlighting Colossus.

☐**G.I. JOE UNIVERSE 3 —**
(Of 4)

☐**THE OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE 14 —**

☐**SAVAGE TALES 8 —**
(Cover by Camp/John Severin, Sam Glanzman and others) Black and white.

☐**TRANSFORMERS DIGEST 1 —**
Reprsinting TRANSFORMERS 1 and 2.

☐**MARVEL UNIVERSE HANDBOOK TRADE PAPERBACK 1**

EPIC (MARVEL)

9/2/86 SHIPPING

☐**SWASHBUCKLERS 10 —**
(Mantlo/Isherwood) The Colonizers attack a planet, which the Swashbucklers have sworn to defend Direct sales only.

9/9/86 SHIPPING

☐**GROO THE WANDERER 23 —**
(Aragones with Evanier)

☐**BOZZ CHRONICLES 6 —**
(Michelinie/Blevins) Bozz travels to the Dark Continent. Direct sales only.

9/16/86 SHIPPING

☐**ELEKTRA:ASSASSIN 4 —**
(Of 8) (Miller/Sienkiewicz) Can Garrett and Elektra find a fulfilling relationship with each other while everyone and their mother tries to kill them? Direct sales only.

9/23/86 SHIPPING

☐**ELFQUEST 18 —**
(Wendy & Richard Pini)

☐**STEELGRIP STARKEY 5 —**
(Of 6) (Weiss/Mayerik/Sherman/Cover by Mayerik/Sherman) Direct sales only.

STAR (MARVEL)

9/2/86 SHIPPING

☐**DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH 1 —**
(Stan Lee/Saviuk) Stan Lee scripts the adventures of Flash Gordon and Mandrake.

☐**HE-MAN AND THE MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE 5 —**
(Carlin/Wilson/Janke)

☐**PETER PORKER 13 —**
(Carlin/Albelo/Fournier/Cover by Albelo/Fournier)

9/9/86 SHIPPING

☐**CHUCK NORRIS AND THE KARATE KOMNANDOS 1 —**
(Duffy/Ditko)

☐**EWOKS 11 —**
(Manak/Kremer/Roettcher)

9/16/86 SHIPPING

☐**MUPPET BABIES 11 —**
(Kay/Severin)

9/23/86 SHIPPING

☐**CARE BEARS 8 —**
(Kay/Post/Edelman)

☐**INHUMANOIDS 1 —**
(Salicrup/Fry/DelBeato)

COMICO

9/5/86 SHIPPING

☐**ROBOTECH, The New Generation 10**

9/19/86 SHIPPING

☐**JONNY QUEST 4 —**
(William Messner-Loesbs/Tom Yeates/Dan Adkins.)

☐**ROBOTECH, The Macross Saga 14 —**
(Jack Herman/Mike Leeke/Keith Wilson)

10/3/86 SHIPPING

☐**GRENDEL 1 —**
(Matt Wagner/and uniquely illustrated by the new team of Arnold and Jacob Pander/Jay Geldhof)

☐**ROBOTECH, Masters 11 -**
(Mike Baron/Neil Vokes/Sam Kieth/Keith Wilson.)

COMICS FILE MAGAZINE

The first definitive series about the superheroic myths of the modern world—comic books! Every issue combines a careful analysis of the individual hero or team as they appear within the comic books that chronicle them along with a guide to key events in their history and interviews with the artists, writers and editors that have played a major role in their creation.

Comic book historian James Van Hise, former editor of one of the oldest publications about comic books ever and a widely published author on popular entertainment, as well as a contributing editor of Comics Feature, is the main author of the series. Additional material has been provided by such diverse and talented individuals as Roy Thomas, Ron Goulart and John Peel.

VIPS

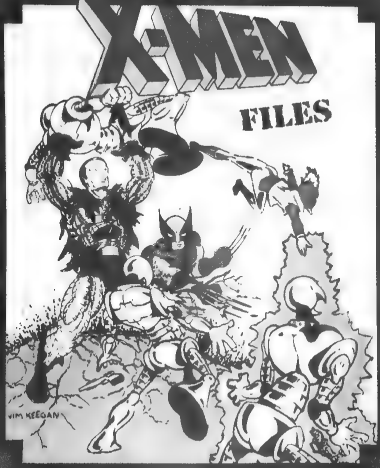
Please!

ORDER ON COUPON PAGE

COMICS FILE MAGAZINE SPOTLIGHT ON:

THE MAN OF STEEL

SPOTLIGHT ON

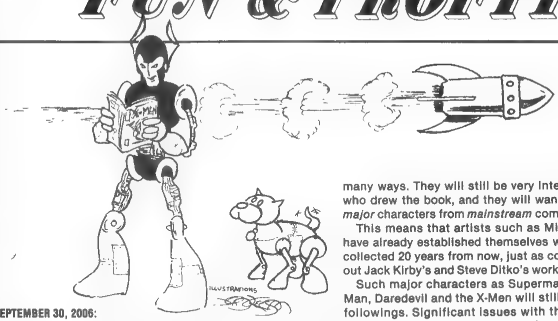


COLLECT THE WHOLE SET!

COMICS FILE MAGAZINE SPOTLIGHT ON:

FUN & PROFIT

BY MIKE BENTON



SEPTEMBER 30, 2006:

"Marvel Comics released **X-Men Comics** *453 and the* **Web of Spider Man** *hit issue 262 this month. Next month, the eighth new Superman comic book series,* **Re-Action Comics**, *will celebrate its tenth anniversary.*

"DC Comics also announced today that with its latest price increase, regular newsstand comics will now cost $4.95 an issue.

"Meanwhile, collectors at an auction during the 37th Annual San Diego Comic Book convention set record highs by bidding $2,895.00 for a mint copy of **X-Men 1**.*..."*

The odds are that at least one of the above predictions may come true in the comic collecting field twenty years from now.

Today collectors can become so concerned with this month's new titles and last month's back issues that they don't see comic collecting as a long-term hobby and investment.

I first discovered the world of buying and selling old comic books twenty years ago this last summer.

Back in 1966, I was buying EC comics for $2 each and first issues of **Fantastic Four** and **Justice League of America** for less than $5 a pop.

I got many good deals back in those days, but I also passed up a lot of collections that would have made me rich today if I had had the foresight.

This column I thought it might be interesting to play a WHAT IF ... game.

What new comics this year will be the most valuable in the year 2006?

Looking back at 1966, I could list a thousand comics I should have bought then. Looking at this year's books and ahead to 2006, it gets a little tougher.

First, what kind of collector will be around in the year 2006 and what books will he want from 1986?

I think that collectors 20 years from now will be like us in many ways. They will still be very interested in the *artist* who drew the book, and they will want to concentrate on *major* characters from *mainstream* companies.

This means that artists such as Miller and Byrne who have already established themselves will probably still be collected 20 years from now, just as collectors today seek out Jack Kirby's and Steve Ditko's work from the 1950s.

Such major characters as Superman, Batman, Spider-Man, Daredevil and the X-Men will still have their devoted followings. Significant issues with these characters, including **X-Men 94**, **Daredevil 158** and **Spiderman 252** will be the key books in next century's collection.

A safe guess is that the collector in the year 2006 will want those books from 1986 that feature a strong artist who is doing work on a long-running character for a major comic company.

This year that indicates Miller's Batman and Byrne's Superman as the two top items for resale in the 21st century. No surprises here.

I'll also go out on a limb and predict that there may also be a strong cult in the year 2006 for the high-quality *color* comics from the top five major alternative publishers.

Comic books from Eclipse, First and the defunct Pacific Comics were published in runs of 10,000 to 40,000 — about the lowest runs possible for color comics. I think we'll see alot of 21st century collectors trying to get *every* issue of Eclipse or First comics, much like advanced collectors today do with EC comics or Avon comics from the 1950s. *(Mike — what about '60s Gold Key or Radio or '70s Atlas? — Happy Hal)*

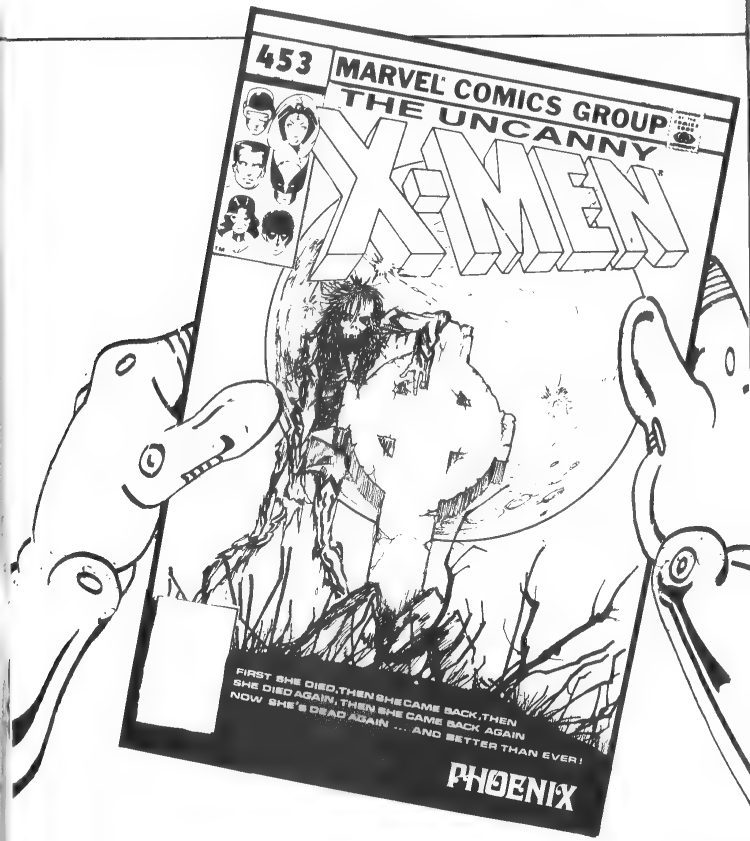
On the other hand, I don't think that the black and white alternatives have much of a chance in the back issue market 20 years from now. Counterfeiting will be too easy for black and whites, and I don't think that age will treat them too well — witness the fading and murkiness of the undergrounds from only 15 years ago.

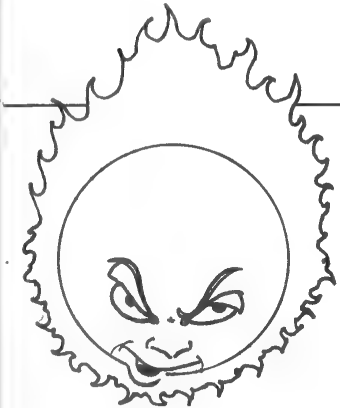
Another strong area of interest twenty years from now may be in the limited fan press offerings available this year, such as the color indexes and histories of comic titles.

In a nutshell: If you're buying with an eye on the 21st century, put your money on the proven fan-favorite artists, the mainstream major characters and take a chance on the limited and high quality production work from the alternatives.

And buy a copy of **X-Men 1** while you're at it, just for extra insurance.

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE





STOP! IT'S MURDER

Some of the rarest comic books in the country are being destroyed by people who love them the most — dealers and collectors.

You don't believe me? Go to a comic book shop, attend a comic convention, or sneak into a collector's bedroom. In all these places, you'll see rare and prized comics *hanging on walls*.

Stores put their high dollar comics under glass or on their store walls. Collectors often frame their valuable books to show them off.

And what happens? Sunlight, flourescent light, and incandescent lights flood the covers of these books day in and day out. Besides heat, light is the greatest enemy of comic books. Direct light can ruin a comic book in a matter of weeks.

Try this experiment. Set a piece of newspaper on top of the dashboard of your car and drive around for a week. Then compare the sun-exposed paper to a new one. The exposed newspaper will be brown or yellow and start to crumble.

Comic books, like that newspaper, are also made up of newsprint pulp. Light does the same thing to a comic.

Yet, every comic book store I have ever been in always has its high-dollar comics displayed in direct light. I've seen some shops hang their books in their front windows!

What's worse, it's the expensive books that take longer to sell, so they can sit in light or under a window case for months or even years.

At conventions, I see dealers taping their rarities on the wall show after show. A lot of times, the same dealers are taping the same books up to be exposed to artificial light week in and week out.

I shuddered when a collector invited me into his bedroom and showed me copies of **Superman** 1 through 10 and **Batman** 1 through 10 framed over his and his wife's double beds. He even had track lights shining on the comics day and night (except when he went to sleep)!

Now I realize dealers have to display comics to sell them, but they should minimize direct lighting on their books and rotate the stock.

Collectors should never hang comics on a wall. If you want to display a book, have a color copy of the cover made, frame the copy and store the original away in the dark.

I know a lot of people want comic *collectors* to come out of the closet, but please — leave your *comics* in the closet (or at least some place dark!)

PASSING A POOR COMIC BOOK OFF AS NEAR MINT!

REPAIRED, RESTORED, OR RIPPED-OFF?

Everybody has owned a damaged comic at one time. Maybe our comic's cover had a chunk out, or a page missing or a taped spine. You probably wished that the comic was in better shape, especially if it was a scarce issue.

Today, there are several dozen experts who can repair damaged comic books. They can fix holes, remove tape and re-paint covers so that a beat-to-death comic can suddenly have a new lease on life.

Nothing wrong with that. I am worried, however, about the guys who tell you that they can make a POOR comic turn into a NEAR MINT book so that you can sell it for about ten times more.

In fact, the repair and restoration business is getting so prevalent, I would hesitate very much about buying any high-dollar comic advertised as NEAR MINT.

Many times, these "near mint" books are the result of hours of repair and tinkering. What you're paying for is somebody else's restoration work instead of for a comic in its original condition.

Do you know that dealers can buy cans of comic book cover gloss to spray over old comic books? One ad even says that you can use this spray to give your books that "original Mint look."

There's also gallon cans of whitening stuff for comic book pages so you can paint and bleach those old brown and brittle pages to a bright white!

Obviously, there's a point where repairing a collectible comic becomes fraudulent. But where does fair restoration practices stop and cheating the buyer begin in the area of comic book repair?

First, a comic book should never be cosmetically altered just for the sake of meeting a grading standard. This means that putting gloss on a cover or artificially lightening brown pages to make a comic look "minty" is not a fair trade practice.

Another suspect practice is "trimming" the cover of a worn comic. Some dealers will cut a comic book a fraction of an inch around the edges to get rid of chips and small tears in order to get an extra new appearance.

Other unfair practices include repainting a comic's cover to hide defects. Dealers can buy over 60 different colors that are matched to the comic book cover so they can do "touch up" work.

So much for fraudulent repair work — now, what are fair and desirable restoration practices?

Number one is deacidifying the book. This does not alter the book's appearance, and actually extends its life. Whenever financially feasible, valuable comics *should* be deacidified.

Another good practice is the removal of tape from a book. Comics should never be taped in the first place, and tape left on a book will discolor and damage the comic. Experts can remove tape without damaging your book. You probably shouldn't try it, however!

Replacing rusty staples in a comic with stainless steel staples is also another fair and acceptable practice. Rusty staples can discolor and cause further damage to a comic's pages. Another acceptable practice is drycleaning or vacuuming a comic to remove grime and dirt.

The best restoration practices *extend* the life of a comic and help preserve it.

There are some gray areas in comic repair, however. For example, pressing a comic to remove a spine roll is not dishonest, but it may harm the comic because of the heat and moisture that are used when some comics are pressed flat.

Another "iffy" area is repairing tears. Experts can reweave the paper fibers of a comic together to mend tears invisibly. I have no problem with that, since it makes the comic more solid. I do object, however, to replacing missing chunks from pages and covers with other paper and then coloring the newly added chunks to hide the repair work.

In summary, dealers and collectors should restore comics in order to preserve them and extend their life of readability.

They should never, however, do touch-up work and cosmetic tampering just to jack up the book's price. This means no use of foreign materials, such as new colors, paper, cover gloss, etc. on the original comic.

And if you do have a comic repaired, be sure to tell your prospective buyers about the restoration work. CF

Mike Sexton is the author of Comic Book Collecting for Fun and Profit and our resident investment genius!

HEROES

BY WILL MURRAY

Back in the early days of the Marvel Universe the pantheon was a loose collection of oddball superheroes. They had a rude magic then that they soon outgrew. And one of the early casualties of Marvel's coming of age was the first hero to appear in one of Stan Lee's early all-monster fantasy titles — and one of my favorite characters.

I'm referring, of course, to Henry Pym, the Ant-Man.

Henry Pym was born in the pages of **Tales to Astonish** in 1961, just two months after **The Fantastic Four** debuted. He wasn't the Ant-Man then. Rather, he was "The Man in the Ant Hill," which was the lead story in **Tales to Astonish** 27. At the time, **Tales to Astonish** was just another of Marvel's monster-of-the-month titles and Henry Pym was simply another of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's hapless heroes.

Pym was the discoverer of a reducing serum. He self-tested it without so much as obtaining FDA approval, and quickly found himself trapped in an ant-hill. He might have died there, but for a friendly ant who came to his rescue. Having learned his lesson, Pym poured his precious reducing and enlarging serums down the sink, and vowed never again to step on an ant hill.

LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD HEROES

That should have been the end of Hank Pym. But things were changing in the world of comic books. Monsters were on their way out and superheroes were back in. **The Fantastic Four**, barely a year old, was pulling in reader mail like crazy. Over at DC, they were having a population explosion of four-color crusaders.

According to Stan Lee, the impetus to revive Henry Pym was that sales figures for **Astonish 27** showed the book outsold the entire Marvel line for 1961. (Including **The Fantastic Four**?) He figured the cover-featured "Man in the Ant Hill" possessed some kind of magic appeal, so he turned the concept into a superhero strip. (He also scripted an identical story, "The Man in the Beehive" for the August issue of **Tales of Suspense** on the theory that if one recycling didn't work, another might.)

I don't know, but I imagine that DC's success in reviving the Atom in 1961 might also have helped to shape the process a bit. Lee may have glanced at The Atom, saw a scientist/superhero in red-and-blue tights who could shrink to tiny size simply by reaching for his belt buckle, while still retaining his full-sized strength, and attempted a variation.

In any case, Henry Pym made his superhero debut in **Tales to Astonish** 35. The story was called, rather dubiously, "The Return of the Ant-Man." According to scripter Larry Leiber (who had written the original story), it seems that Henry developed a fascination with hexapoda — ants to you and me. He designed a cybernetic helmet and a protective suit of unstable molecules (I wonder if Reed Richards ever sued Pym for patent infringement?) and prepared to go back into the ant hill for scientific research.

But then fate intervened. The U.S. Government gave Pym the assignment to create an anti-radiation gas and four assistants to help him. So he put his own plans aside. But when Communist agents took control of his lab, Pym was forced to use his reducing serum and became for the first time, the Astonishing Ant-Man. Braving his way into the ant hill, Pym learns to communicate with the ants, and after some difficulty, leads a swarm of them against the Communist agents, freeing his fellow scientists.

As a first adventure, it was strictly routine. But the ideas were novel. Jack Kirby designed a striking red-and-blue costume with an abstract black chest design for Pym that puzzled me as a kid. I think it's supposed to represent an ant's segmented body. But the best part was Pym's cybernetic helmet. It resembled a metallic ant's head with twin antennae and a microphone suspended between stylized mandibles.

(It's worth pointing out that Spider-Man had to have been created at almost exactly the same time as Ant-Man. I wonder if, as the ideas bubbled in Lee's head, he didn't toss variations back and forth. Suppose Spider-Man was the one who shrank and commmunicated with the insect

MAN AND ANT-MAN

**WHICH CAME FIRST—
THE ANT-MAN OR THE EGG? EGGHEAD WAS THE FIRST REAL SUPERVILLAIN TO APPEAR IN THE SERIES.**

world? Or Ant-Man had been an ordinary-sized man with the proportionate strength of an ant and the ability to scale walls? Would either have worked out? The imagination reels.)

In the next issue, Ant-Man's equipment was improved. Pym strapped gas canisters to his belt, one holding reducing serum, the other enlarging serum. By releasing either as a gas and inhaling it, he shot up or down in size. It was a neat idea, and even an improvement of the Atom's gimmick, who rotated his belt buckle to achieve his size-shifting.

Pym's lab was also tricked up with a clever Jack Kirby concept: A miniature catapult. As Ant-Man, he *shot* himself wherever he wanted to go. Friendly ants, tipped off by cybernetic link, converged to form a safety net when Pym landed at his destination.

TARZAN OF THE ANTS

Unfortunately all these neat Kirbyesque gimmicks supplemented a fairly undistinguished story. In that one, Ant-Man tangled with another Communist menace, this time in the person of an arch-spy Comrade X. Over the next few issues, Lee, Leiber, Kirby and inker Dick Ayers churned out a string of visually appealing, but minor yarns. Ant-Man's first archvillain appeared in 38. This was Egghead, a typical Kirby "Wild hair" character that was a throwback to his **Fighting American** days. Egghead was an oddball scientist with an egg-shaped cranium and a yen for mayhem. He duplicated Pym's ant-communications equipment and tried to turn Ant-Man's ants against him. Egghead failed because he mistakenly believed that Pym's control over insects was based on domination, not friendship and loyalty. It was an interesting theme, Pym's relationship with insects. In a sense, this was less of a superhero strip than it was a kind of high-tech Tarzan of the Ants. The best of the Ant-Man stories never lost sight of that fact. When Stan Lee let the schtick slip, the character was lost.

In **Tales to Astonish 39**, my favorite "Pym of the Ants" story took place, "The Vengeance of the Scarlet Beetle."

Summoned by his insect friends to a peculiar gathering of six-legged critters, Pym is alarmed to discover a glowing red beetle mustering the forces of insectdom for a bold strike to wrest the planet from the human race. It seems that this beetle had been irradiated during a nuclear experiment and gained not only intelligence, but ambition. He also gets Pym's enlarging gas away from him and jumps to giant size, leaving Ant-Man helpless until his ant friends come to the rescue. From there, it's Ant-Man and his ants versus the insect hordes of the Scarlet Beetle. Guess who wins.

The story wasn't much more than an old **Tales to Astonish** style fantasy guest-starring Ant-Man. Only Jack Kirby could have made this absurd plot play. As it happened, Kirby soon left the series, turning it over to Don Heck. I've always liked Heck's work during this period, but I can't imagine a less appealing artist for an inch-tall hero. Where Kirby drew from Ant-Man's perspective, turning the world into an fascinating place of oversized people and objects, Heck drew our ordinary world, in which Ant-Man was often an unheroic speck in a panel. The approach did not work, and Heck's scratchy style seemed especially out of place when the hero needed to look as powerful as possible.

DISTAFF INSTINCTS

After three issues of Heck's version of the character, editor Lee introduced radical changes. With issue 44, Ant-Man stopped being a solo act. He also got a new scripter, the forgotten but literate Ernie Hart, writing as H.E. Huntley. Jack Kirby returned, with Heck providing delicate and understated inks. Lee continued to plot the stories.

"The Creature From Kosmos" introduced spoiled heiress Janet Van Dyne, who comes to Henry Pym after the mysterious death of her scientist father. At first, Pym thinks her a flighty bubblehead. She considers him the stuffy scientist type. But Janet has no where else to turn, and Pym is intrigued by her resemblance to his long-dead wife, Maria. For scripter Hart has revised Pym's colorless origin. It seems that before **Astonish** 27, Pym had married Maria Trovaya, a Hungarian refugee. Returning to her native land on honeymoon, she was kidnapped and killed by Soviet agents. Thereafter, with his dead wife's saying, "Go to the ants, thou sluggard," ringing in his ears, Pym plunges himself into the research that eventually results in the reducing serum and his interest in communicating with ants.

This flashback sidesteps earlier continuity, but that's less important than the way it brings the new Henry Pym into focus. Sad, driven, he is a lonely but compelling figure.

So when Janet Van Dyne swears to go after her father's murderers, her passion ignites a flame in Pym's heart. Revealing himself to be Ant-Man, he offers her an interesting proposal: Undergo genetic restructuring and become his partner. The process is simple. Wasp enzymes are implanted under her skin so that, when exposed to Pym's reducing gas, she sprouts tiny antennae and wasp wings. Janet becomes the Wasp, a biological counterpart to Ant-Man.

Together, they go after and vanquish Dr. Van Dyne's killer — who happens to be a gaseous alien creature whom Van Dyne accidentally called down from the stars.

They made an interesting team, Ant-Man and the Wasp. At first Lee and Hart played Van Dyne as a lovesick young thing who openly professed her interest in Pym — or any eligible bachelor who got within stinging distance. Pym although attracted to her, dismissed her as too young, and too immature for him. But deep inside, an attraction smouldered.

It was a good new beginning, but it went awry. For one thing, Don Heck returned as permanent artist. The stories lurched from minor villian to minor villain, as Ant-Man and the Wasp tangled with the likes of the Porcupine (a ridiculous scientist in a quill suit), Egghead (back with a new secret weapon — an ant-eater!) and a giant robot Cyclops from Outer Space. For a little guy, Pym seemed to be constantly fighting off alien invaders. He tangled with four in 1963 alone. The Fantastic Four never saw that kind of cosmic action!

One of the few good "Pym of the Ants" stories of this period was in **Astonish** 47. By this time, Pym has taken to riding a flying ant named Korr just to keep up with the Wasp. In this story, they battle Trago, a cheap jazz trumpeter with an unusual riff — his music can bend others to his will. Ant-Man goes after him when he uses his talent to hypnotize New York City prior to a looting spree. When Trago charms a snake into going after Ant-Man, Korr is killed while saving Pym. After besting Trago, the story ends on a sad note, with Pym depressed over the loss of his steed. A silly idea out of context, given Henry Pym's past, it was actually quite touching — if you're ten years old, as I was when I first read it.

EVEN JOHN BYRNE HAD A BRIEF STINT DRAWING THE ADVENTURES OF EVERYONE'S FAVORITE ANT!

ADDING A "GI"

The Ant-Man strip must have been in deep trouble, for the partnership of Ant-Man and the Wasp lasted only five issues. With **Astonish** 49, Pym gained two letters in his *nom de querre*, but the difference was...astonishing. Ant-Man became Giant-Man.

"The Birth of Giant-Man" was produced by the same art team that did the Wasp's introduction: Kirby and Heck, with Lee scripting. Ernie Hart was gone for good. The story was a rehash of an earlier Ant-Man yarn, "Prisoner of the Slave World." Scientists are spirited to another dimension by aliens who want Earth's weapons technology. After an accident in which Pym's new size-changing capsules turn him into Giant-Man for the first time, the Eraser shows up. He's a green-skinned alien who wears electronic attachments on his palms. When he waves them, each swipe erases a swatch of an object or person. Pym knows he's in trouble when he notices there's a diagonal empty space where his chest was. A few more swipes and he's gone — actually teleported to Dimension Z.

I used to think The Eraser's method of teleportation was unique — until I found out that Jack Kirby used the identical idea in an issue of **Black Cat Mystic** back in 1957. But that just goes to show you how much input Kirby had into Lee's plots even in 1963.

Pym gets out of it when the Wasp emerges from his smock and feeds him a size capsule. He shoots up to twelve feet and springs into action, alternately shrinking and expanding until the inhabitants of Dimension Z throw in the towel.

The next issue was even better, as the duo tangled with the Human Top, a young mutant with the ability to spin and travel at incredible speed just like a living top. The villain was based on an old Timely character — which proves that Lee's input into these plots was not to be denied either. Reviving old Timely characters was one of his early affections. The story of Giant-Man's obsession to capture the Human Top was a whirlwind epic that spilled over two issues. It showed just how interesting Giant-Man could be.

Unfortunately, he would never be that exciting again, as the strip swiftly degenerated into the same kind of indifference that had characterized the Don Heck episodes. Dick Ayers took over the art, and even Lee's scripts couldn't make the series sing. There was a succession of boring villains — The Black Knight, the Magician and Colossus — another giant invader from the stars. One promising issue featured a Giant-Man/Spider-Man crossover. But it was an idea that was too late. An Ant-Man/Spider-Man crossover would have been exciting, but apparently Lee never thought of it.

Giant-Man also went through countless minor variations in costume and powers. After less than a year, his size-changing capsules were summarily dropped because of concern over perceived drug abuse. In action, Giant-Man literally popped pills in order to alter his height. The Wasp also went through similar gyrations in costuming. Alas, she seemed superfluous, if not entirely out of place alongside Giant-Man. Only on those rare occasions when Pym zipped down to ant-size did the team work again. But the worst part was the new cybernetic helmet Pym wore as Giant/Ant-Man. It was little more than a red cowl with feelers.

CROWDED OUT

After Giant-Man tangled with the Hulk in **Astonish** 59, the Hulk ended up in a regular series in the back of the book. Kirby and Steve Ditko drew that strip in turns, and they made the lead Giant-Man feature look sick by comparison. Various Golden Age artists such as Carl Burgos and Bob Powell attempted new approaches. None seemed to work. Giant-Man got a modified uniform in **Astonish 65**, with a more impresive cybernetic helmet, but I still missed the old one, and his relationship with the neighborhood ants.

His relationship with Janet had also changed by this time. It became warmer, more bantering, and the older-man/lovesick girl dynamic evaporated. At one point Pym realized his love for Janet and was about to propose when her flighty behavior convinced him she didn't love him after all. It was a weakened relationship, by this time. The villains got no better either, with such successive stories as "The Menace of Madame Macabre" and "The Hidden Man and his Rays of Doom." (Lee always knew when he had a stinker of a story — he gave it a windy, overblown title.) Even the return of Jack Kirby, limited to layouts only, starting with **Tales to Astonish** 66, made no difference.

In **Astonish** 69, dated July, 1965, Pym found himself again battling the Human Top, who captured Janet. Fearing for her life, he vows never to place her in jeopardy again. After the inevitable rescue, Pym promises her a new life. It sounded as if retirement was around the corner. As it happened, Lee announced there would be a new feature in **Astonish** beginning the next issue. Back in 1965, my money was on a replacement for the Hulk. Not only had one magazine died under him, but at the end of that month's Hulk strip, Bruce Banner was pronounced dead.

But a month later, the Sub-Mariner was occupying Henry Pym's rightful place. Who would have thunk it? He had dropped out of The Avengers just three months before, so Pym effectively vanished from the Marvel Universe without further explanation. And that was the end of Giant-Man.

RETURN APPEARANCES

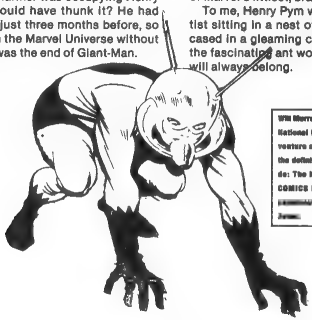
Until his resurrection in **The Avengers** as Goliath a year or so later, that is. Pym has gone through some incredible character and personality changes since then. So much so that I barely recognize him as the man who pined for his murdered first wife or wept over the death of a loyal ant. Various characters took over his powers and identities, making him a reluctant pioneer of this era of substitute Green Lanterns and Iron Men. Pym briefly returned to his Ant-Man identity in **Marvel Feature** in 1972, but he's since been disgraced, divorced from Janet—whom he eventually married—and practically exiled from the Marvel Universe. More recently, he's resurfaced—particularly in **The West Coast Avengers**, amid signs that he will be rehabilitated. I hope so. There isn't a more abused, maligned or mishandled character in comics history. And it's unfortunate. He deserves better.

But Henry Pym has never been an untroubled character. Starting with his unsuperheroic beginning, all the way through his incredible variances in sizes and powers — an artist's nightmare because of perspective problems—he just never jelled.

Or almost never. Looking back, there were spots that still shine 25 years later: The Lee/Kirby Ant-Man solo stories, the Wasp's origin and the first three Giant-Man appearances. To me they are minor classics of Marvel's innocent period. It's unfortunate that no one at Marvel could make it work for very long. But Lee and Kirby were too busy sustaining their first string of characters — The Fantastic Four, Thor and others — to devote much attention to one of Marvel's littlest, bravest and oldest heroes.

To me, Henry Pym will always be a serious young scientist sitting in a nest of electronic gear, his blond head encased in a gleaming cybernetic helmet as he listens in on the fascinating ant world. A world to which, in my mind, he will always belong.

CF



Will Murray writes the Doc Savage series for National Public Radio, ghosts a men's adventure series of paperbacks and penned the definitive history of The Shadow, Duende: The History of the Shadow. Murray is COMICS FEATURE's alternate Silver Age [illegible] along with Will [illegible] & [illegible] [illegible].

Animated Antics

BY MICHAEL EURY

Unless you are at the age where shoe-tying is a bold new adventure, you haven't watched many televised cartoons lately. Animation has become a dirty word, due to celluloid waste based on best-selling toys (**He-Man, Robotech, Thundercats**) and current fads (such as **Hulk Hogan's Rock 'n' Wrestling**, a truly fatuous excuse for television programming).

Years ago, before the majority of prime time series cloned the shows that were hits during the previous season, network executives offered their viewers *variety*, including dramas, westerns, comedies, news programs and even cartoons. For a period of two decades, fifteen different animated programs earned a berth in the nightly tv line-ups. Some became overnight sensations, still present in current popular culture; others disappeared into oblivion quicker than you could say "Pet Rock" or "Luke and Laura." Here is the story of a (prime) time when men shared the airwaves with bunny rabbits, chipmunks and fat cavemen.

1) CBS CARTOON THEATRE (6/13/58—9/5/60, CBS)

This program, a summer replacement series, boasted one distinction: it was prime time's first cartoon. Comic Dick Van Dyke served as host for the **Cartoon Theatre**, which reran old "Terrytoons" theatrical shorts. Featured were the anemic antics of Heckle and Jeckle, Gandy Goose, Little Roquefort, Dinky Duck and Sour Puss, characters that were blatant rip-offs of previously successful concepts. These cartoons certainly deserve the limbo they have been banished to today.

2) THE BOING BOING SHOW (9/30/58 —10/3/58 CBS)

Also airing as a summer series, **The Boing Boing Show** proved worthier of an evening time slot than its predecessor, having once received an Academy Award during its initial run in movie houses. Youthful Gerald McBoing Boing, based on a Dr. Seuss record, was unable to speak and communicated only through pantomine and the sound effect "boing boing." Voice master Howard Morris, best known as Ernest T. Bass on **The Andy Griffith Show**, contributed the "voice" for Gerald.

3) BEANY AND CECIL (9/30/60—12/20/62, ABC)

A musical jingle proudly proclaiming the name of creator Bob Clampett opened each installment of this imaginative cartoon series. It revolved around the sea-faring adventures of a young boy named Beany, who took his name from the propellored cap he sported; his crusty but kind-hearted sailor-mentor Captain Huffenpuff; the despicable Dishonest John, a vermin that made Al Capone look like Mother Theresa; and Beany's pet Cecil, a goofy but endearing "Sea-sick Seaserpent." Originally debuting in puppet form on the syndicated **Time for Beany** in the 1950s, Father Clampett guided his offspring into the world of animation — and prime time — a decade later. Cartoon aficionados fondly remember the show's inventive cast of characters, clever satire (the "Bridge of Bardot," the "Lenny Spruce Tree"), and spellbinding production quality. With such mindless drivel as **G.I. Joe** and **The Transformers** polluting afternoon tv schedules, it's a shame that Cecil and his little pal Beany don't resurface into the waters of syndication. (Note: Ten volumes of **Beany and Cecil** cartoons are now available on videocassette from RCA/Columbia Home Video.)

YABBA DABBA DOO—IT'S FRED AND BARNEY!

4) THE FLINTSTONES (9/30/60—9/2/66, ABC)

This "Modern stone-age family" headlined television's premier situation comedy cartoon series. Fred and Wilma Flintstone and neighbors Barney and Betty Rubble were thinly disguised parodies of the Kramden and Norton families from **The Honeymooners**. The Flintstones and Rubbles were not unlike average contemporary Americans; they had children (Pebbles and Bamm Bamm); pets (Dino the dinosaur and Hoppy the Hopasaurus); an over-bearing employer (Mr. Slate, a character whose visual was frightfully similar to N.C. Senator Jesse Helms); and problems

with the cost of living and everyday survival (do you know what the price of a pound of dinosaur steak is today?). Prehistoric parodies of modern household appliances (a mammoth's trunk for a vacuum cleaner, a bird's beak for a stereo stylus, etc.) often added sight gags to this highly comical series.

Since its debut, **The Flintstones** has been a staple of television, moving from prime time to Saturday morning to eventual syndication. It is virtually impossible to find a tv market that doesn't run the program. Despite a few seasons of disappointing animation, the show's longevity can be attributed to its identifiable characters and genuinely hilarious scripts and comic situations.

The Flintstones has also spawned a legacy of marketing tie-ins, including a feature length motion picture (1966's **A Man Called Flintstone**), comic books, toys, records, clothing, Flintstone Chewable Vitamins and Pebbles Breakfast Cereals. the show's theme song has been arranged for jazz ensembles and parodied by Joe Piscopo, Sting and a satirist calling himself "Bruce Springstone." Four tv spin-offs also featured Bedrock's favorite sons, but none of them ever managed to capture the charm of the original series.

The Flintstones has displayed a durability that no other television cartoon has ever matched, a fact that certainly causes co-creators Bill Hanna and Joseph Barbera to happily shout "Yabba Dabba Doo!"

5) THE BUGS BUNNY SHOW (10/11/60-9/25/82, ABC)

The famous "wascally wabbit" and his Looney Tunes entourage, including Porky Pig, Tweety and Sylvester, Daffy Duck, the Roadrunner and Elmer Fudd, first came to network television as a prime time entry and then moved on to Saturday mornings and syndication (where they can still be found today). The episodes appearing therein were the classic theatrical shorts from the '40s and '50s, updated with new segues and framing sequences that often featured Daffy Duck's never-ending power play to steal the show from Bugs. Although frequently targeted for excessive violence by many mothers and child-protection groups, these Warner Bros. episodes possess a dry wit which has garnered timeless popularity from adults as well as the kiddies.

6) THE BULLWINKLE SHOW (9/24/61—9/16/62, NBC)

Writer/animator Jay Ward is renown for creating some of the most bizarre cartoon concepts ever, and this show is certainly no exception. Its protagonists were Bullwinkle Moose and Rocky the Flying Squirrel, who constantly squared off in comic mishaps against the sinister Soviet

ALWAYS DO RIGHT, DUDLEY DORIGHT!

Boris Badenov and his femme fatale Natasha. Other segments in the program included "Dudley DoRight," about a dim-witted Canadian Mountie who showed more affection to his horse than his girlfriend; "The Improbable History of Mr. Peabody," where a genius canine (Peabody) traveled through time with his young human friend, Sherman (truly a story of a dog and his boy); and rollicking take-offs of Mother Goose in "Fractured Fairy Tales."

This series originally debuted in 1959 as part of ABC's afternoon schedule, under the title of **Rocky and Friends.** It shifted its emphasis towards Bullwinkle during its prime time run, and continued for years on Saturday mornings. Currently in syndication as **Rocky and Bullwinkle,** this cartoon remains a perennial favorite due to its wry satire injected by creator Ward.

HE'S TOP CAT!

7) TOP CAT (9/27/61—9/26/62, ABC)

Like **The Flintstones**, this clever Hanna Barbera creation was an animated sitcom, not a compilation of shorter cartoons. Con artist Top Cat (T.C. to friends), remarkably similar to Phil Silvers' Sgt. Bilko, led a group of misfit alley cats through greedy scams which always result in pandemonium. Officer Dibbie endured the unfortunate task of trying to protect the streets and citizens of New York City from Top Cat's shifty swindles.

Although only one season of episodes was produced, solid comedy writing made this series memorable. Top Cat's nine lives refuse to let him die: he appeared on Saturday mornings until the late 1960s, and now stars in his own Worldvision home videocassettes.

8) CALVIN AND THE COLONEL (10/3/61—9/22/62, ABC)

How do you produce a 1960s version of **Amos 'n' Andy** and avoid racial stereotypes? You make the cast of characters *animals*, that's how! At least that was the reasoning behind this series, starring the mentally-hibernating bear Calvin, the sly fox Colonel and that weasel (literally) of a shyster, Oliver Wendell Clutch.

Calvin and the Colonel revolved around the comedy calamities of its Southern cast, apparently misplaced into the Big Apple. Created by Freeman Gosdin and Charles Correll, famous for their portrayals of radio's **Amos 'n' Andy**, **Calvin and the Colonel** never quite caught on with audiences, and moseyed on down to the Land O' Neva to be Seen Again after only one season. Now ain't dat a shame, Sapphire?

9) THE ALVIN SHOW (10/14/61—9/12/62, CBS)

In the late 1950s Ross Bagdasarian, whose stage name was David Seville, scored a huge success with a novelty record called *The Chipmunk Song*. He mechanically sped up his own voice to create the high pitched timbres of Alvin, Simon and Theodore. After his initial and subsequent musical successes, he introduced his chipmunks — and himself as David Seville — to television in animated form.

The Alvin Show highlighted the show business careers of the devilish Alvin, the cherubic Theodore and the intelligent Simon. Seville served as their manager/guardian, and unfortunately, also as the scapegoat of Alvin's constant practical jokes and mischievousness. Clyde Crashcup, a scientist that took credit for inventing almost everything imaginable, also appeared in the series. It enjoyed an extensive Saturday morning run after its prime time stint.

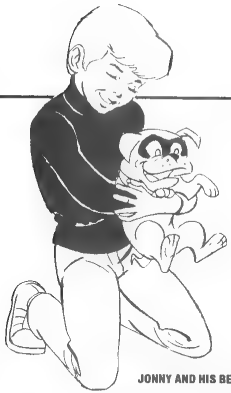
The 1980s have witnessed the Chipmunks' resurgence in popularity. NBC currently programs a new version of the cartoon, but it pales in comparison to the original, primarily due to the death of Bagdasarian some years back. Alvin and his crew have also re-entered the recording studio to release a number of new albums, including *Chipmunk Punk*.

10) THE JETSONS (9/23/62—9/8/63, ABC)

A futuristic answer to **The Flintstones**, this cartoon humorously depicted life in the 21st Century. Its star was George Jetson, a bumbling but well-meaning employee of Spacely Sprockets. His boy Elroy, daughter Judy and Jane, his wife, comprised the remainder of the Jetson clan. Also appearing were their pet dog Astro, Rosie the Robot maid and Cosmo Spacely, George's diminuitive, irate boss.

Computers handled everyday tasks in this series and provided wickedly witty visual gags. Jane's dinner preparations consisted of punching a sequence of buttons. Each morning, a conveyor belt whisked George through a machine that would shave, shower and even dress him. See what we're missing by being born 100 years too early?

The Jetsons experienced an initial prime time life of one season: 24 episodes, which continued on all three networks as a part of the Saturday morning schedule for many years. However, the series is currently undergoing a successful revival, as 41 new episodes joined the original two dozen in syndication last fall. George and his family are reappearing on toys, clothing items and buttons. There is even talk of a live-action **Jetsons** film, starring Chevy Chase as George and Danny DeVito as Mr. Spacely, a movie that would certainly rocket fans into orbit!



JONNY AND HIS BEST BUDDY, BANDIT!

11) JONNY QUEST (9/18/64—9/9/65, ABC)

Now *this* was an adventure series that no child (or man-child) could resist! Eleven-year-old Jonny and his scientist father Dr. Benton Quest were catapulted into globe-spanning — ahem — *quests* involving anything from mummies in the tombs of Egypt to werewolves in the forests of Canada. Accompanying them were bodyguard Race Bannon, Jonny's mystical friend from India, Hadji and the ever-yapping family bulldog Bandit. Heralded by many as one of the best written and animated cartoons ever (and certainly Hanna-Barbera's crowning achievement), **Jonny Quest** later appeared on each of the three networks on Saturday mornings and new episodes are being made for syndication.

12) THE FAMOUS ADVENTURES OF MR. MAGOO (9/19/64—8/21/65, NBC)

Mr. Magoo was a nearsighted old gentleman whose poor eyesight frequently got him — and others — into trouble. His myopic misadventures were a long-time staple of movie theaters and syndicated television, but it wasn't until a tv special entitled **Mr. Magoo's Christmas Carol**, featuring Magoo as Scrooge, that NBC decided to launch him in a prime time series. His **Famous Adventures** hilariously recreated legitimate and fictional history, with Mr. Magoo portraying such legendary figures as William Tell, Rip Van Winkle, Paul Revere, Sherlock Holmes' Doctor Watson and even Dick Tracy.

Selections from this series are now available on videocassettes from Paramount HomeVideo.

13) WHERE'S HUDDLES? (7/1/70—9/9/70, CBS)

Hanna-Barbera attempted to combine their successful cartoon sitcom formula with the celebrated sport of football in this short-lived summer replacement series. Ed Huddles and Bubba McCoy (who bore numerous similarities to Fred Flintstone and Barney Rubble) played for the Rhinos, a pro team whose notoriety for disorganization far outweighed their achievements. **Where's Huddles?** failed to score a touchdown with viewers and was relegated to the record books of prime time flops.

12) WAIT TILL YOUR FATHER GETS HOME (10/7/1974, Syndicated)

Prime time's last attempt at an all-new weekly cartoon series was one of its *worst* with this banal animated theft of **All in the Family** at that time one of tv's hottest hits. Tom Bosley provided the voice of Harry Boyle, an overly conservative father plagued by generation gaps from his long-haired son and feminist daughter (does this sound at all familiar?). Bosley undoubtedly wishes that all available prints of this turkey were forever filed away in a Glad trash bag.

15) THE BUGS BUNNY/ROADRUNNER SHOW (4/27/76—6/1/76, CBS)

CBS afforded a 1976 prime time slot to their popular Saturday morning superstar, Bugs Bunny, headlining him with the Road Runner. This five-week experiment once again re-presented the classic Warner Bros. movie features of two and three decades earlier. Bugs Bunny occasionally hops into prime time today in holiday animated specials. After all, you can't keep a good rabbit down!

So there you have it: tales (or tails) of mice and men (with funny noses). As video sewage like "The Cosby Clones" and "Dynasty IV — The Colby's Hairdresser" slimes into evening television, one cannot help but wonder why an enterprising network doesn't attempt another ... prime time cartoon.

Mike Eury is a guest columnist filling-in for James Van Hise. Eury's piece arrived, illustrative art and all, via the mails. He has promised a follow-up piece on characters that have made the translation from comic book/strip to animation for a future issue. This certainly goes to prove that we do indeed sometimes use submissions that come unsolicited through the mails!

—Happy Hal

THE LEGENDS RE~BORN

Frank Miller's DARK KNIGHT

John Byrne's MAN OF STEEL

BY JAMES VAN HISE

Marvel has been the most visible comic book publisher for years now. But 1986 has emerged as the year that DC stole Marvel's thunder. Despite Marvel's trumpeting of their 25th anniversary and their unveiling of a whole "New Universe", DC has captured the imagination of the media with the double header of a completely updated Batman and Superman for the Eighties. DC's grim and dynamic direct market **The Watchmen** has also stirred rumblings of new respect for the oldest existing publisher of comic books. Things are happening over at DC and people are paying attention — vast amounts of attention.

John Byrne has introduced a streamlined Superman which goes back to the basic roots of the character as he was first introduced in 1938, but filtered through the lens of talents honed while reshaping some of Marvel's more notable heroes.

Frank Miller has created nothing less than a sensation with **The Dark Knight**, his grim version of a Batman fifteen years after retirement. In it Miller literally redefined the superhero myth. Comics will never be looked at quite so undemandingly again. Now Miller will chronicle the dawn of the caped crusaader's career in a four issue run of the regular series to be titled: **Batman Year One**. The concept behind this four issue series emerged several years ago when Steve Gerber approached DC Comics with exciting plans to revamp Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman. But then the company wasn't open to such radical surgery on their best known characters!

"The notes which have become **Batman: Year One** were generated several years ago when Steve Gerber and I proposed a revamping of DC's three main characters," Miller recalls. "This would have been a streamlining and updating of Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman. The three books were going to be called **The Man of Steel** (by Steve and myself), **Dark Knight** by me and **Amazon** by Steve. That never came to be. There just seemed to be too many people who were interested in those characters. The kind of autonomy that Steve and I needed was impossible.

"I kept the notes and eventually used the **Dark Knight** title for my recent series, expanding on an idea of Batman at the end of his career. **Year One** is essentially the notes I had written for the first few issues of the new Batman title. It's changed quite a bit over time as I've realized that I don't really need to slash through continuity with as sharp a blade as I thought. Doing **The Dark Knight** has shown me that there's been enough good material during the 50 years that these characters have been done that I wouldn't want to throw the baby out with the bath water."

Unlike the new Superman series which is starting over again with a first issue, Miller rejected the idea of doing that with his Batman.

"I objected to that because I didn't feel that fleshing out an unknown part of his history justified wiping out 50 years of publication," Miller explains. "This story came to be when Denny O'Neil called me up and asked me to consider doing something with David Mazzuchelli (the artist Frank had collaborated with so successfully in his recent work in **Daredevil**). David and I talked it over and we decided to go ahead with it because it was an opportunity to do a crime comic — one that would be much more direct and to the point than the run we did on **Daredevil**. We would have a character completely unhampered by any previous continuity."

© 1985 D.C. Comics

STALKING THE DARK ALLEYS OF GOTHAM WITH

FRANK MILLER'S

BATMAN

"The story of **Batman: Year One** takes place when Bruce Wayne is 25 years old — the year that he becomes Batman. It has two lead characters, Bruce Wayne and James Gordon, who is then a lieutenant of police in Gotham City. Gordon is perhaps the only honest cop that Gotham has — it's the most reprehensible, horrible city in the country. Gordon is new there and so he is hunting down this vigilante at the same time that he's fighting his own police department." The setting for **Year One** is actually between the panels of Bob Kane's classic Batman origin. "One of the key moments in the first issue is the bat coming through the window," Miller reveals. "Bruce Wayne has spent 12 years travelling the world, training himself to become Batman. But he doesn't yet have the Batman identity in place — doesn't know exactly how he is going to begin his war on crime. He's gained all the skills and knowledge but he knows that he needs something more than that. In the course of the series, not only does he become Batman, but we see him in his first conflicts, mainly with the police but also with Gotham's underworld. He's at war with Gotham's police, their mayor and the police commissioner — who is one of the rottenest SOBS you'll ever see. Batman is trying to bring sense to Gotham City.

"In many ways this is going to be a model of the character while Denny's running the show."

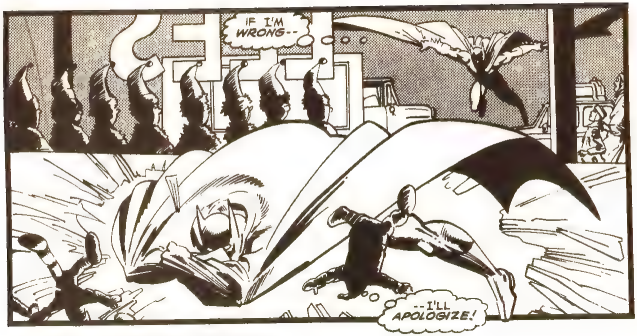
Miller stresses that his Batman should not be confused with the Forties version of the character. "This is the Batman that's being done now. This isn't a Golden Age version of the character, nor is **Dark Knight**. Both are the character relating to his present continuity. This is the opposite of the Dark Knight because it is Batman before he got very good at it. He makes constant mistakes throughout the series. He doesn't have enough control over his emotions. He picks a fight with a pimp in the first issue for no reason at all except that it's fun. He often carries the wrong things in his utility belt; some of his devices don't work. He's a very young man in this — very different than the very sure, powerful and wise character that people seek to do in the present Batman stories."

FIRST ENCOUNTERS

Frank Miller became intrigued with the possibilities inherent in Batman several years ago, which is when he first approached DC with the idea which years later would turn into **Dark Knight**.

© 1985 D C Comics

...NO, MR. PRESIDENT. I'M AFRAID HE'LL *NEVER* LET ME BRING HIM IN *ALIVE*...



© 1985 D.C. Comics

An early version of Miller's Batman...

"My very first Batman proposal was entitled **Batman: 10 Years After**," Miller recalls. "It was proposed to Dick Giordano on an airplane flight to Dallas years ago. Dick and I both wanted DC to start publishing graphic novels to follow Marvel's lead in that area. So I proposed a story of Batman ten years after the fact, going out one last time. Dick loved it. We planned to do it but, for some reason or other, never did. It eventually became **Dark Knight**.

"That's when my interest in Batman began. Up until then, people were frequently asking me to do the character. I resisted because I felt that if I didn't have anything new to contribute to the character, I'd just leave the good work that's been done stand. It wasn't until my own ideas evolved to the point where they were very different than the status quo that I felt that it was worth doing. I had something new to say with him. Much like with Daredevil where I stayed away for several years and came back when I had a new story, a new angle; something to contribute.

"Catwoman is the only costumed villain in Year One. I show sides of her life that haven't been shown before and perhaps contradict come stories from the Fifties. The wonderful thing about these characters is that you can do as much with them as the story demands and leave as much open as you want. I like leaving things fairly loose when there's no need to actually pin them down."

"I stayed away until...I had a new story, a new angle, something to contribute."
FRANK MILLER

"**Batman: Year One** takes place before there was a Robin. But this is not because Miller finds the kid sidekick concept archaic, he does use the character in **Dark Knight**.

"Originally there was no Robin involved in **Dark Knight**, and then the idea developed," Miller states, explaining the link between the two characters within the dynamics of the story. "Until Robin is part of Batman in **Dark Knight**, he feels incomplete. I think that's a necessary part of the chemistry for the character and Robin works better with Batman being an older man than if he's a man in his prime. I made Robin younger and Batman older. My Robin is only 13 years old and my Batman is 55. But in **Year One**, Batman is so young that for him to have a sidekick would be fool hardy and unnecessary. he's still finding his own way. The only way that Robin really works is to be someone who learns from this older, more experienced man.

"It's funny because when I was a kid I disliked Robin intensely, and, of course, in **Dark Knight** I fell completely in love with my version of Robin."

WHAT YEAR IS YEAR ONE?

One of the problems involved in conceiving **Batman: Year One** was deciding when it would take place if the modern version of Batman operates in 1986.

"That is the toughest issue involved in putting together a series like this because if the present stories take place in the late 1980s, then **Dark Knight** takes place after the turn of the century and **Batman: Year One** takes place in the mid-Seventies. That all gets too confusing so we try to fudge it a bit. I would really like **Batman: Year One** to take place right now, but the actual time frame has to be left fuzzy because Batman seems to stay the same age year after year. We don't want to do a story which would be completely out of date.

"They run into that problem constantly," Miller continues, discussing the problem of time in the continuity of comic books. "I remember being completly freaked out when Superboy became a character in the 1960s because then I started feeling old. There's an area of greyness that has to be left in any series of this sort. **Batman: Year One** could take place anywhere between the 1940s and the 1990s, although obviously the clothing styles date it.

"This is a constant problem in the series. I had Bruce Wayne arriving in Gotham City in a Concord Jet and it caused some trouble. Editor Denny O'Neil rightly said that that would pin down the timeframe as happening within the past few years, so that gets converted into something more ambiguous. Luckily, Bruce Wayne drives classically designed cars. David and I are constantly swapping notes on what kind of car Bruce drives and what kind of clothes he wears. I don't want to make it feel like nostalgia — it's a very immediate, fast-paced adventure. So that whole question of time hangs in the air, as it does in **Dark Knight** — I've done my best to dance around it there."

What is dealt with explicitly in both **Dark Knight** and **Batman: Year One** is the political repercussions of having a costumed vigilante loose in a city. Miller sees this as being a direct descendant of the heroic vigilantes of the past.

© 1986 D.C. Comics

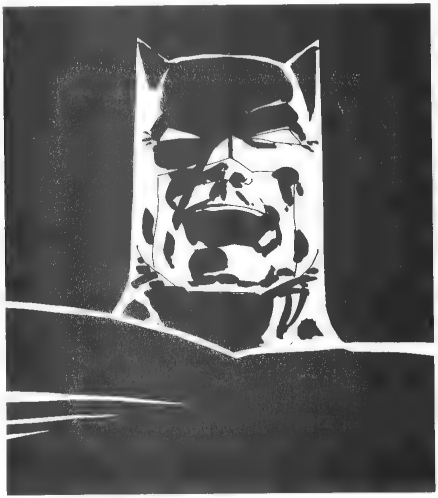
"I've read The Spider and The Shadow and I really enjoyed them. You can see a clear line from The Shadow to Batman to Dirty Harry or to **Death Wish** and I definitely love working with that sort of character.

"In the case of Batman, we're talking about someone who has much more dimension and much more stature than Dirty Harry because he is so much a moral force.

"There's a scene in the first issue of **Year One** where Bruce Wayne is arrested and overcomes the cops who arrested him. They're left in a burning car. The point is made that seeing them unconscious in a car on fire, the first thing he thinks of is that these men have families. Not wanting anyone to suffer the loss that he did, he pulls them out because he doesn't want anyone losing a father. He's a great deal more than a vengeance-seeker. He's someone who wants to bring justice. There's more in that character than simple violent catharsis.

"The overall feel of **Batman: Year One** is very much that of a crime adventure story," says Miller. "It covers his first encounters with Catwoman, and also with Gordon. Gordon and Batman are enemies. The main tension behind the story is between them because they desperately need each other."

Although Miller has only recently begun writing the series, he is already getting responses on it from DC. "I've written one script of the four so far and it's gotten a violent reaction from the folks around the DC offices. Dick Giordano and Denny O'Neil both love it! The series is going to see print the way I want it to."



THE ADVENTURES OF JOHN BYRNE'S

© 1985 D.C. Comics

In June, the first issue of **The Man of Steel** hit the stands presenting John Byrne's reworking of the Superman legend into a more streamlined form. Gone is the vast family of stars whose numbers had made them their own distinct and identifiable minority group on our fair planet. In the wake of DC's **Crisis On Infinite Earths** mini-series with its winnowing down of the DC universe's super-populace, the new Superman accelerates the remake. Supergirl died in the **Crisis**; in the new era of Superman she will never have lived at all.

Since he first appeared in **Action Comics** number one in 1938, Superman periodically undergoes cosmetic surgery to sweep out the clutter which accumulates over the years.

John Byrne put things into perspective on a recent *Today Show* appearance when he stated, "This is about the fifth time that a 'fix' has been done on the character, but this is the most sweeping. Over the years we have reached points — basically at about 15 year intervals — where we've said, 'Something has got to be done here!' " This time, John Byrne was the man for the job.

Back in 1983, in **COMICS FEATURE** 27, Byrne was already intimating his interest in Superman revealing that it was the first American comic book that he'd seen after moving to Canada from England.

"The very first exposure was Superman," Byrne stated, "I locked into Batman and Superman and Superboy, all of what was to become the Superman family books." Byrne had also thought about how Superman could do exactly what he does. When asked to elaborate on some of his thoughts on how Superman exercises his abilities, at the time he stated, "Boy, that would by opening such a can of worms! The only thing I've really gotten into is applying the Marvel logic to Superman. We start with being willing to stretch disbelief that a character can do a thing. Then we try to come up with a logic as to why they can do it. Since Superman seems to be able to do all manner of things that defy physical laws as we understand them, I just look at it and say, 'Well, there must be some kind of psionic power here.' Because if you pick up a building by one corner, the building will fall apart unless you are somehow physically or mentally holding it together."

Byrne has been preparing for a long time for his ultimate creative challenge — the recreation of Superman in his own artistic vision.

While there have been superficial attempts to rework the hero in the past, the climate for substantive change was just never there — until now. In 1971, DC's idea of making a big change in Superman was to render all of the kryptonite on Earth inert—but that was as far as it went. No new direction was established, and stories proceeded along lines not much dif-

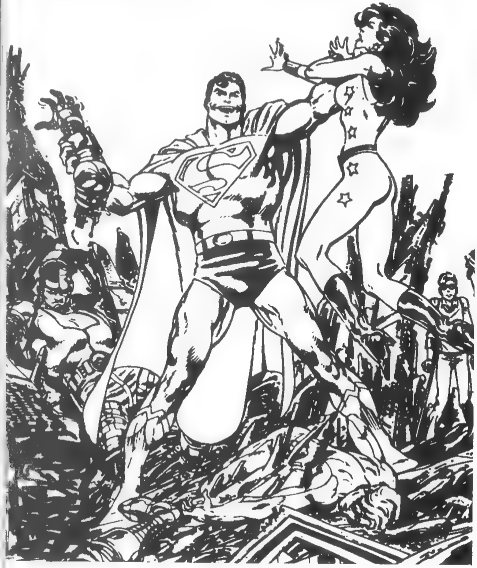
SUPERMAN

ferent from what had gone before. But in 1985, DC published **Crisis On Infinite Earths** in which old standbys such as The Flash and Supergirl met their dooms and Earth II (as well as all of the other parallel universes populated by innumerable heroes and villains) was wiped out, taking many Golden Age characters with it including the alternate Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman. In this climate of radical house-cleaning, radically streamlining Superman seemed more attractive John Byrne was given the go-ahead to return the Man of Steel to the way in which he was spawned by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster in 1938.

"We have restructured his history because a lot of debris gathered in a 50 year period," stated Byrne on his **Today** show appearance.

"Everybody else with 'Super' in front of their name — Supergirl, Superdog, Supercat, Superbat, Superaardvark — all of these are gone. I don't think we'll miss them!"

What made this revamping of Superman different is that DC was reworking their whole fictional universe. Frank Miller was portraying a very different Batman in his **Dark Knight** series and George Perez is developing a plan to breathe new life into the red, white and blue adventures of Wonder Woman. Elsewhere Jan Strnad has completely redesigned the Atom and Tony Isabella and Richard Howell have set a new direction for Hawkmen. The winds of change are in the air as DC is looking to its new talent to attempt to reverse the decline that has plagued the company for over 15 years.



ENTER JOHN BYRNE

Artist John Byrne first encountered Superman by way of the Fifties TV series.

"That was the beginning, then," says Byrne in his afterward to **Man of Steel** issue one. "The beginning of a fascination with comic books in general, and Superman in particular, that has persisted more or less consistently to the present day. I grew up reading comics. Probably I was not a steady consumer for more than six or seven years, but that amounted to a good third of my life, then. Comic books were a very important part of the shaping of my imagination, and DC comics in particular.

Over the years, Byrne saw the Superman family of characters grow to ridiculous levels. "There was already Krypto, the superdog. Now came Kara, Superman's cousin, who called herself Supergirl. She won her own series and gave the world Streaky, the supercat and Comet the superhorse." Then there was Beppo, the supermonkey, and Titanno, the superape who had lethal Kryptonite vision.

But this was a far cry from the pure form of the character as the only survivor of a doomed world.

"I think one of the most important aspects of the character was that he was the *sole* survivor of the doomed planet Krypton, and now he's that again. Nobody else walked away from that.

"DC Comics has hired me to guide the reshaping of the Superman legend," Byrne continues in **Man Of Steel**. "To try to pare away some of the barnacles that have attached themselves to the company's flagship title. To try to make Superman of today as exciting in his own right as was that primal Superman of yesterday. To try to recreate Superman as a character more in tune with the needs of the modern comic book audience. A much *smaller* audience than when I was ten years old. But a much more demanding one, too."

One of Byrne's tenets in reworking the character is that Superman never publicly reveal that he has a secret identity. This allows him to create a more unfettered life for Clark Kent. In fact, Clark is much different from any version of him portrayed in comic books before.

"He isn't as mild-mannered any more — he's a little more oomphy!" Byrne stated on *Today*. "He's always been a wimp. Unfortunately poor Clark has had to run around pretending not to be Superman. He has had no depth to himself.

"Now we've restructured it so that the world no longer knows that he has a secret identity, so he doesn't have to pretend not to be Superman any more."

But Clark is still a reporter. "He's the best reporter cum feature writer cum whatever else it is he does on the **Planet**." In that way the character will more closely follow the traditional concept rather than the TV news anchor job he was given during the last facelift the character was given.

"He was on TV for awhile. That ties him down too much. When you have to be on-camera you can't be dashing off to phone booths changing to Superman. It kind of cramps your style."

But lest we forget, Lois Lane will still be around, although in a form that is more self-assured and self-motivating. Not unlike the version of Lois portrayed in the Superman motion pictures of recent years.

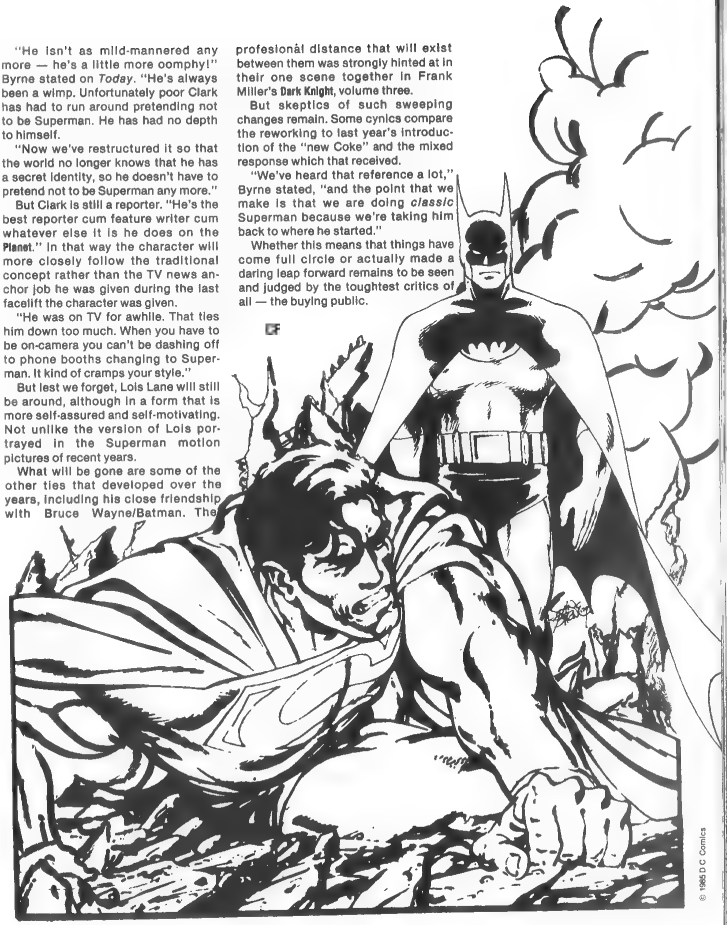
What will be gone are some of the other ties that developed over the years, including his close friendship with Bruce Wayne/Batman. The profesionál distance that will exist between them was strongly hinted at in their one scene together in Frank Miller's **Dark Knight**, volume three.

But skeptics of such sweeping changes remain. Some cynics compare the reworking to last year's introduction of the "new Coke" and the mixed response which that received.

"We've heard that reference a lot," Byrne stated, "and the point that we make is that we are doing *classic* Superman because we're taking him back to where he started."

Whether this means that things have come full circle or actually made a daring leap forward remains to be seen and judged by the toughtest critics of all — the buying public.

CF



© 1986 D.C. Comics

LOOKING BACK ON THE GOLDEN AGE

BY ROY THOMAS

© 1985 D.C. Comics

NON-SUPERPOWERED CRIMINALS REALLY HAD LITTLE CHANCE AGAINST THE MAN OF TOMORROW!

What do you do when you're faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap tall buildings at a single bound — and your country *still* won't let you join the army?

That, as covered last time, was the problem that faced Kal-L, alias Clark Kent, alias Superman, during World War Two after he flunked his army physical (by inadvertently using his X-ray vision to read the eye chart in the adjoining room).

From there on, Superman was pretty strictly a Home Front hero for the duration," as the phrase went at the time.

Fortunately, there was plenty there to keep the Man of Steel and his readers occupied.

Of course, there was always his arch-enemmy Luthor.

SUPERMAN AT WAR (PART TWO)

(The "Lex" wasn't added till years later, when the "L.L." fetish began accidentally with Lois Lane in 1938.) Luthor had started out as a redhead and had lost all his hair 'twixt one early story and the next, but except for an inability to grow hair he seemed capable of nearly any scientific achievement you could think of.

Always for the advancement of evil, naturally.

One of the most memorable Superman—Luthor encounters began in **Action Comics** 47. Luthor got his hands on an ancient talisman known as "The Powerstone," which turned him into a giant who was even a match for the Kryptonian. It took a second story (in **Superman** 17) to dispose permanently of the Powerstone.

(Permanently, that is, if you don't count the rematch artist Jerry Ordway and I dreamed up for some early '80s issues of **All-Star Squadron**. But that time around, Superman's old foe The Ultra-Humanite had got hold of the Powerstone, and it took practically the entire 1942 DC super-hero lineup to set things aright).

Luthor was indefatiguable, though.

Once, when he evidently got tired of fighting Supes under his own name, he even temporarily adapted the identity of "The Light."

LOTS OF BAD GUYS

But even on those rare occasions when he didn't break out of prison for two or three months at a stretch, the Man of Tomorrow was kept busy by a long list of villains: The Archer, Puzzler, Toyman, Domino, Metalo, Funnyface, The Leopard, Cobra King, The Lynx, Prankster, plus a host of non-costumed antagonists.

They mostly had one thing in common. If you didn't count their mechanical contrivances and maybe a death ray or three, they were really just "normal guys," and thus hardly a fair match for Superman in those pre-Kryptonite days.

Oh, there were a *few* war-related stories, from time to time. Most memorably, in 1943, in a story entitled "America's Secret Weapon," the Man of Steel helped train U.S. troops by taking part in mock-war exercises at an Army base.

He was genuinely touched by the ovation he got when he arrived:

"American soldiers cheering me, when all civilized peoples in the world are cheering them! It's the grandest tribute I've every had!"

Superman's participation in the day's war games warped the results, of course. Real armies are rarely helped out by having a super-hero show up to lift their trucks across "bombed-out" bridges or to destroy an enemy's air cover.

An interesting twist to the story was that the army which had Superman on its side actually *lost* the day's games... which clearly demonstrated that the true "secret weapon"

© 1986 D.C. Comics

of America was "the courage of the common soldier," not the powers of an alien *ubermensch*.

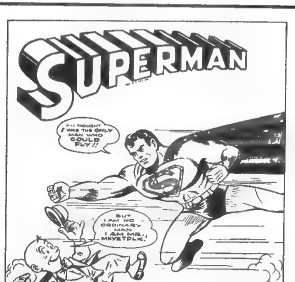
Something strange was happening to Superman, though, and it wasn't just being a 4-F.

For now that the skies over America were filled with super-heroes (at least in the comic-books), Superman was not as unique as he had once been. And many of them had some gimmick or other designed to make them stand out from the costumed crowd.

There was The Human Torch, an android who burst into fire — the Sub-Mariner, who could both swim and fly at great speed and who was royalty besides — The Hawkman, who specialized in flying along — The Flash, who ran like the devil — the list goes on and on.

What's more, many of these rivals were even published by DC itself, which was then the largest comic-book publisher on the face of the war-torn globe.

So Superman, too, needed a gimmick.



© 1986 D.C. Comics

ONE OF THE STUPIDEST VILLAINS IN COMICS, MR. MXYZPTLK WAS ALSO ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR! CAN YOU GET HIM TO SAY HIS NAME BACKWARD?

A COMIC TWIST

Sure, he'd gained considerably in power since he'd come on the scene in '38. Now he could fly instead of merely leap 1/8 of a mile. He was stronger, faster, smarter ... and he'd picked up X-ray vision and super-hearing somewhere along the way, too.

But just having formidable powers hadn't been enough for Jerry Siegel's other creation, The Spectre, had they?

The Spectre had started out with, as someone once said, "roughly the powers of God," and had wound up invisible, serving as a virtual sidekick to a bumbling plainclothes cop named Percival Popp.

Nope, Superman clearly needed an edge.

The edge, somebody decided, was *humor*.

At the beginning of his career, he had occasionally been advertised as a great "adventure and humor" character, though the former had gotten the upper hand.

Now, someone decided to bring the humor back with a vengeance... not to mention a heavy hand.

Already, the list of wartime villains shows it starting: The Toyman with his madly inventive toys... The Prankster seemingly living only to play tricks on Superman....

But now, something new was added to the formula.

First, there was J. Wilbur Wolfingham, "the greatest conman of all time," introduced in **Superman** 28. A heavyset man sporting a monocle and a cigar, he plagued the Man of Steel with schemes to defraud old-time movie comedians of their life savings... schemes to sell a town a bogus oil well... schemes to swindle the lovelorn by promising young men rich wives.

Funny stuff, maybe, in its mild way... but hardly up to the promise of those early covers, which had portrayed Superman tossing around automobiles, smashing subs and planes, routing whole flame-throwing armies with his bare fists.

And then there was Mr. Mxyzptlk starting in **Superman** 30.

This imp from another dimension went Toyman and Prankster one better: he not only lived merely to bother Superman, but he had magic to help him. He'd better have had *something*, since he was maybe three feet tall, tops.

As almost everyone knows, Mxyzptlk could only be sent back to his own dimension by being tricked into saying his own name backward — quite a feat, actually, when you figure out that most people would have a helluva time just saying it *forward*.

No doubt about it: Mxyzptlkwas popular from the start. He returned and returned and returned, and almost nobody who's read Supes' adventures for any period of time needs any introduction to him.

(Heck, I had a good time myself sticking him into the first story I ever wrote for DC, and I tossed in Hoppy the Marvel Bunny for good measure and consider the result one of my favorite tales among those I've written... but the fact remains that, back in the '40s, something more had been needed to keep Supes on top of the super-hero heap.)

(Note: Alan Moore has given the Mxyzptlk legend a twist while clearing the deck for the new Superman—Happy Hal)

And then there was Susie Tompkins, a supposedly charming brat of a girl who caused Superman nearly as much trouble as Luthor.

And then there was "Susie Meets Mr. Mxyzptlk," and— Well, you get the idea.

Amazingly, nobody in all those years ever came up with the idea of creating villains who were **physically** in Superman's class. Or **else**, if anybody did, he was immediately exiled to writing "Dover and Clover," who were "twice as good as an ordinary detective, because they are twins!"

Nor, since the idea of an inter-company team-up had to wait for the mid 1970s' **Superman vs. Spider-Man**, was there ever any possibility of Supes battling Captain Marvel anywhere except in court.

RADIATION

And so, the Man of Steel continued to get more and more powerful, his foes sillier and if anything weaker — until somebody connected with the Superman radio program came up with the idea of Kryptonite...which worked till that got out of hand.

Ironically, one of the potentially most important WWII adventures of Superman didn't come out in the newsstands until late 1945, months after the war was ended by the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Cover-dated Jan. — Feb. 1946, it began with one of those blurbs of which I was always suspicious, even as a kid back in the 1940s:

"**Now It Can Be Told!** Due to wartime censorship restrictions dealing with atomic experiments (see **Time**, Aug. 20, 1945, p. 72 and **Newsweek**, August 20, 1945, p. 68), this story was not previously released to the public. You'll understand why as you read about the astounding weapon that Superman's ancient foe, Luthor, turns loose against a city in..."**The Battle of the Atoms!**"

The story begins with Clark and Lois driving along "a desolate stretch of wilderness north of Metropolis," and discovering trees twisted into pretzel-like shapes, huge boulders melted by some strange force, even the steel supports of a water tower bent out of shape.

Turns out this was another of Luthor's many inventions — a "molecular impulsion beam." Understandably, Luthor had to stop Clark and Lois from printing what they'd seen.

He did so by hopping into a weird transparent airship and attacking the Daily Planet Building. Typewriters, walls, presses all began to melt, shake and/or shimmy.

After saving the building and its occupants, Superman went after Luthor — only to find that even *he* was susceptible to the atomic power his arch-foe could now unleash.

Superman was literally blasted from the sky. Luckily for us all, he fell into the condenser of a power plant, which sent millions of volts of electricity through his body. This naturally woke him up.

When he caught up with Luthor's airship, the evil scientist tried his last ploy.

"Stay away, or I'll kill us both!" he cried, hurling what looked like a small hand grenade at Superman. "Nothing can survive the blast of this atomic bomb!"

"Let's see," responded Supes, gathering the thing to his chest.

It exploded — but 'twould seem that electrical shock had *really* regenerated Superman, 'cause this time he wasn't even fazed.

Thus, since Luthor's ray projectors had been smashed by the recoil from the first blast, the secret of atomic energy was safe in official American hands alone for a little while longer.

"Now It Can Be Told!"

Sure it can.

"It's just the same kind of overblown if understandable puffery which many comics creators have tossed onto a cover or splash page to give it a spurious immediacy," I mused when I first read the story. (Though, of course, being only six or seven years old at that time, I probably expressed myself in somewhat simpler terms).

Thing is — I was wrong.

Later on, I heard on good authority that this story had originally been scheduled for publication quite a few months earlier. Only somehow the FBI had gotten wind of it, and they'd contacted DC Comics and, er, strongly suggested the story be held back from publication for a while.

Though doubtless not understanding what was at issue, DC complied—and so this episode became one of the first *post-war* tales.

Now that the war was over, Superman could go back to ranging worldwide in his exploits for some years, as semi-omnipotent as American power itself must have seemed in the years between Hiroshima and Sputnik.

But that's another story...for someone else to tell.

CF

NEXT: BATMAN AT WAR!

Roy Thomas currently writes All-Star Comics, Infinity, Inc. and Secret Origins for DC Comics. He was formerly Editor-in-Chief of Marvel Comics and a writer of most of their major heroes. During his stay at Marvel, he brought both Conan and Star Wars to the company.

© 1985 D C Comics

Games

BY STEVE PERRIN

Let us assume that you are running a superhero campaign using any of the various game systems I've discussed in these pages before. Your players have assembled a proper core of characters and you have put them through one or two plots that you had in mind when the campaign started.

However, now that the newness has worn off, you find that the interest of the players is lagging and you don't know how to get their attention again. If you meet weekly, they seem to lag between games and you spend half the game time getting them going again. If you meet more than once a week, your spouse/parents/roommates/others start complaining about the excessive time the games are taking up. What to do?

One quick lift to a campaign is to start involving your players in the game world outside of the game board. There are several ways of doing this.

THE NEWSLETTER: Start up a little newsletter, based on events in the games. Use this one or two page update sheet to summarize what has gone before and what strange doings have impinged on the campaign from outside You can use current events to lend immediacy to the "news" in the letter. After all, how many Russian mutants will fill the skies after Chernobyl? Are all the recent volcanoes *really* just shifting tectonic plates?

The *USS Missouri* is now homeported in the San Francisco Bay Area, where I write these little gems. What use could a properly despicable supervillain make of this fact? A lot of people were upset because of the atomic weapons the "Mighty Mo" might be carrying. Could a villain group decide to add to their own arsenal by appropriating the *Missouri*'s? Too bad I run campaigns situated in Detroit, Dallas and Sacramento...But I'm sure others are making use of them.

THE NEWSLETTER

The point here is not that these events can be used as springboards for games, though they can. They can also just be mentioned in the newsletter to give the players' imaginations a chance to work. If a Gamemaster does his job right with the newsletter, his current event news will keep the players paranoid and always wondering just where the next actual campaign event is coming from.

The newsletter is almost as important for describing past adventures of the heroes. Use a journalistic style of writing and write up the adventures as outsiders would see it. This can be handy for demonstrating to erring players that their heroes are not getting a very good reputation in the outside world. Rumors of lawsuits against overly destructive heroes, villains swearing vengeance, etc. may give the so-called hero the idea that he has to clean up his act or face an assassin or legal action.

The newsletter need not be anything fancy. It can be output on a computer printer or simply done on a typewriter. If you, as Gamemaster, do not have easy access to either, just find a player with delusions of literacy who would like to use his skills in the service of the campaign. Give him the information that must be in the newsletter, and then step back and let him go to town. Don't try to supervise production—he's doing it for fun and should be allowed to have his head in how he does it.

This tactic allows the Gamemaster to get an idea of the players' view of the campaign, which can't hurt.

TREATING THE CAMPAIGN AS A COMIC BOOK: Another way to re-interest your players in the campaign is to give it a more comic book feel. Following the lead of today's comics, don't end an adventure at the climax, end it at a cliffhanger. Let them resolve the cliffhanger at the next session, and lead them on to a new cliffhanger. Of course, this only works with a steady playing group who can be trusted to be around for the next chapter of the cliffhanger.

Make up titles for the adventures, as if they were comic book adventures. No need to go out of your way trying to think up titles. There are classic expressions that work just fine. Are the female members of your hero team (or the girlfriends of the male members) being threatened? This must be the "Damsels In Distress" issue. Aliens invading? "The Threat from Space" covers the subject nicely. Doctor Disgusting making another bid to conquer the world? How about "He Stands to Conquer"? A few years worth of **The Fantastic Four** will give you all the titles you need.

Just remember to change a few words here and there — unless, of course, you are playing a Fantastic Four campaign.

HINTS FOR GAMEMASTERS

DC HEROES METAL FIGURES SETS

Grenadier Models, Inc. has long had an excellent reputation in the games industry for high-quality metal gaming figures. Unlike other figure manufacturers, a few of which have gone under in the last few years, Grenadier has never had much interest in creating vast collections of Napoleonic or American Civil War figures. Instead, Grenadier had consistently relied on the role playing gamer for its business.

For several years, Grenadier was the exclusive manufacturer of authorized figures for Advanced Dungeons and Dragons and its various clones. However, about four years ago TSR and Grenadier had a falling out, and TSR hired its own sculptors and began manufacturing their own figures — with decidedly mixed results.

In the meantime, Grenadier owner Andy Chernak and his other sculptors continue to put out gorgeous fantasy figures without the D&D label. His Dragon-Of-The-Month figures are universally acclaimed and his Giant Club figures and ensembles are excellent assets to any fantasy collections.

However, Grenadier has been doing more than fantasy figures. Shortly after losing the AD&D license, Chernak snared the license for Chaosium's **Call of Cthulhu** and Hero Games' **Champions**. He now has the license for Game Designer Workshop's **Traveller**.

When Mayfair Games came out with **DC Heroes**, Grenadier was the obvious choice again. For some time, now, two boxes of metal figures have been available for the **DC Heroes** player.

THE NEW TEEN TITANS AND ADVERSARIES: This box contains figures for six of the Titans — Changling, Cyborg, Jericho, Nightwing, Starfire and Wonder Girl—along with four of their enemies—Blackfire, Brother Blood, Terminator and Trigon.

For the most part, these figures are good looking and useful. In an attempt to make the Titans look young, the uncredited sculptor has made them look small. They all seem a bit frail, which for Cyborg in particular is very strange. Changling is shown in what is supposed to be mid-change to lion shape, but it only serves to look like he's carrying a lion's head around. Granted, Changling would be hard to portray in any case, but this pose is of no particular use. Similarly, many sculptors seem to think that a group of superheroes should have one figure flying. This never really works, because the main use for the figures is in playing the games, and a gamer wants an easily handled figure that looks appropriate in almost any situation. Sadly, Starfire does not.

However, considering the main problem with most boxes of figures—about half are totally unusable—this set comes off very well indeed. It's too bad there is not more cooperation between Mayfair and Grenadier in figure choice. Since one of the first modules published by Mayfair featured the Brotherhood of Evil, having figures of these visually fascinating characters would have been a plus for the set and for the module.

THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA AND ADVERSARIES: In general, this set fares even better than the Teen Titans set for usable figures. Superman and Green Lantern are superb. J'onn J'onzz, Hawkman and Green Arrow are very serviceable (the main criterion for a gaming figure), as are those for Brainiac and the Joker. The Sinestro figure has problems with positioning. In an attempt to depict flying, Sinestro seems to be pointing his ring in one direction and looking in another. The Darkseid figure, on the other hand, looks like he's been taking dancing lessons from Vibe. Part of Darkseid's "charm" is his stately dignity and rocklike imperturbability. The pose looks like he is throwing a snit, which he almost never does.

The worst figure in this set, however, is Batman. He's shown squatting with batarang in hand. I don't know what he intends to do with the batarang in that position, but I'm sure he could never throw it effectively. The figure just looks silly, which I doubt the sculptor intended.

My main comments on this set are that (1) It depicts the "old" Justice League members, which is fairly appropriate since Mayfair's only Justice League module also features the old Leaguers, (2) The set should more properly be called a "Super Powers" set. Darkseid has only once met the Justice League in comics, but he battles the League continually in the Saturday morning **Super Powers** show.

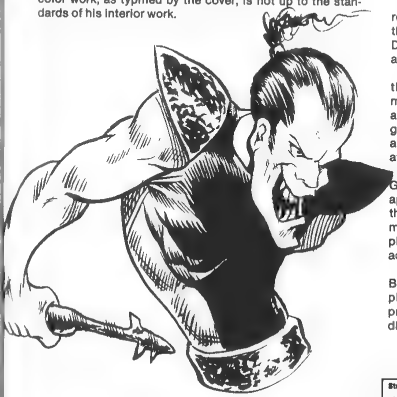
HERO INTO ICE — THE CORIOLIS EFFECT

The first few months of the Iron Crown (ICE) takeover of Hero Games was not as smooth as both parties hoped it would be. I.C.E. took over Hero Games back stock, and are distributing that where they can. As of a month before this writing, however, they had neither reprinted the out-of-print material nor come out with any of the new material that Hero passed on to them.

Finally, ICE has managed to issue Dennis Mallonee's **The Coriolis Effect**, a scenario for **Champions**. The format is very familiar to the followers of Hero Games products. The only mention of Iron Crown is a small copyright line on the back cover. Otherwise, the book looks as if it came from San Mateo, California, not Virginia.

Lamentably, Iron Crown did not make a very good estimation of the appeal of a new **Champions** product. They sold out before they could send out reviewer's copies! You'll learn more about this book when they reissue it and I finally get my review copy.

For now, the artwork is by Glen Johnson, current artist on **The Sun Runners**. Glen is still learning his craft, but his black and white interiors are some of the best that Hero Games has ever been blessed with. Unfortunately, his color work, as typified by the cover, is not up to the standards of his interior work.



TOON — THE CARTOON ROLEPLAYING GAME

And now for something completely different. Steve Jackson Games has long been known for publishing "different" games. The folks at SJS are creative and wacky, and they are the masterminds behind such blockbusters as **Car Wars** ("Drive Offensively") and **Illuminati** ("Be the first on your block to control your block.").

Two years ago, SJS published a game to appeal to the Bugs Bunny and Donald Duck afficianadoes out there. Freelance games designer Greg Costinakyan, known for such upright & serious games as **The Creature That Ate Sheboygan** and **Bug-Eyed Monsters: They're Here to Steal Our Women** gave them the basic rules for **Toon, the Cartoon Roleplaying Game**. SJS editor/developer Warren Spector took the game to its logical limits, and the result is a crazy mini-roleplaying-game that can be played in twenty minutes.

Either this game or West End's **Paranoia** was the first game to use *Chutzpa* as a characteristic for a character, along with such mundane attributes as Muscle (usually designated as Strength in more sober productions), Smarts (commonly called Intelligence), and Zip (generally thought of as Dexterity or Agility).

This game throws out most of the conventions of regular roleplaying. Among other things, death is impossible — the character who absorbs too much damage merely "Falls Down" for three minutes, then rejoins the game. Coyote and Roadrunner fans take note.

The game mechanics are fairly smooth, but leave a lot to the Animator (Gamemaster) to deal with. This is almost mandatory for a game which attempts to deal with the zany atmosphere of a Warner Brothers cartoon. The mechanics give the players a chance to come up with your favorite animated antics, and that's the whole point of a simulation, after all.

This is not a game for long campaigns. My notes to Gamemasters at the start of this column won't have much application here. Zipping around as Crusty Cat for more than 30 minutes begins to pall. Most **Toons** games take about 20 minutes. If the one game I have played was an example, the plot set up by the Animator has little to do with the final action.

This is a "relief" game. If you are tired of dealing with the Blue Horror's 39th deadly serious attempt to take over the planet, **Toon** is easy to start and quick to finish — and provides a much-needed breath of fresh air in the dank and dingy gaming room.

CF

Steve Perrin is the creator of Runequest, Superworld and the Elfquest game along with scores of modules and related items. He has also begun to sell scripts for animation.

COUPON PAGE

MPS

FILES MAGAZINES

- ☐ Avengers One&Two.....$8.95
- ☐ Avengers Three&Four.....$8.95
- ☐ Avengers File One.....$5.95
- ☐ Avengers File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ Avengers File Three.....$5.95
- ☐ Avengers File Four.....$5.95
- ☐ James Bond File One.....$5.95
- ☐ James Bond File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ James Bond File Three.....$5.95
- ☐ James Bond File Four.....$5.95
- ☐ Dark Shadows File One.....$5.95
- ☐ Dark Shadows File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File One.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Three.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Four.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Five.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Six.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Seven.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Eight.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Nine.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Ten.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who Classic File One...$6.95
- ☐ Doctor Who Classic File Two...$6.95
- ☐ Fireball XL-5 File.....$6.95
- ☐ Lost In Space File One.....$5.95
- ☐ Lost In Space File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ Prisoner File One.....$5.95
- ☐ Prisoner File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ Where No Man.....$9.95
- ☐ Star Trek File One.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek File Three.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek File Four.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek File Five.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek File Six.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek File Seven.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek File Eight.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek Movie File One.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek Movie File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek Movie File Three...$5.95
- ☐ The Stingray File.....$6.95
- ☐ Thunderbirds File One.....$6.95
- ☐ Thunderbirds File Two.....$6.95
- ☐ UNCLE File One.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Three.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Four.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Five.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Six.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Seven.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Eight.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE Classic File One.....$6.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Classic Two.....$5.95
- ☐ V File Hardcover.....$19.95
- ☐ V File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ V File Three.....$5.95

HEROES

HEROES BOOKS

- ☐ Bronson.....9.95
- ☐ Eastwood.....9.95
- ☐ British Spies.....5.00
- ☐ Bond Dossier.....5.00
- ☐ UNCLE Handbook I.....9.95
- ☐ UNCLE Handbook II.....9.95

MONSTERLAND BOOKS

- ☐ Alien Cook.....5.00
- ☐ Lovecraft.....5.00
- ☐ Fantasy Illustrator.....12.00
- ☐ Fantastic Movie Memories9.95
- ☐ Godzilla Book.....9.95
- ☐ MAIM.....$5.95

- ☐ Super&Spider File One.....$5.95
- ☐ Super&Spider File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ X-Men File.....$5.95
- ☐ Fantastic Four File.....$5.95
- ☐ Superman File.....$5.95

SCI FI

SCI FI

- ☐ Nimoy.....5.00
- ☐ Shatner.....5.00
- ☐ Interviews.....5.00
- ☐ Technical Side.....6.00
- ☐ Dune.....5.00
- ☐ Blueprinting.....12.00

- ☐ Folio I.....12.00
- ☐ Folio II.....12.00
- ☐ Folio 3.....12.00
- ☐ Folio 4.....12.00
- ☐ Folio Special!.....44.95
- ☐ Future Threads.....10.00
- ☐ Future Threads Deluxe...22.00
- ☐ Technical Book.....10.00
- ☐ Doctor&Enterprise.....10.00
- ☐ Baker.....5.00
- ☐ British TV.....5.00
- ☐ Pertwee.....5.00

Sci Fi Costume.....$9.95
Dr.&Enf. Hardcover.....$19.95

MAGAZINE BACKLIST

E.I. SPECIALS

- ☐ Star Trek.....5.00
- ☐ Star Wars.....5.00
- ☐ Close Encounters.....5.00
- ☐ Flash Gordon.....5.00
- ☐ King Kong.....5.00
- ☐ Fantasy TV.....5.00

MONSTERLAND

- ☐ #1.....25.00
- ☐ #3.....10.00
- ☐ #4.....10.00
- ☐ #5.....10.00
- ☐ #6.....5.00
- ☐ #7.....5.00
- ☐ #8.....5.00
- ☐ #9.....5.00

DAREDEVILS

- ☐ #3.....5.00
- ☐ #4.....5.00
- ☐ #5.....5.00
- ☐ #6.....5.00
- ☐ #7.....5.00
- ☐ #8.....5.00
- ☐ #9.....5.00
- ☐ #10.....5.00
- ☐ #11.....5.00
- ☐ #12.....5.00
- ☐ #13.....5.00
- ☐ #14.....5.00
- ☐ #15.....5.00

HEROES

- ☐ #1.....10.00
- ☐ #2.....5.00
- ☐ #3.....5.00
- ☐ #4.....5.00

FANTASY EMPIRE

- ☐ #3.....5.00
- ☐ #5.....5.00
- ☐ #7.....5.00
- ☐ #8.....5.00
- ☐ #9.....5.00
- ☐ #10.....5.00
- ☐ #12.....5.00
- ☐ #13.....5.00
- ☐ #14.....5.00
- ☐ #15.....5.00
- ☐ #15.....5.00
- ☐ #16.....5.00
- ☐ #18.....5.00
- ☐ #19.....5.00

FANTASY EMPIRE LTD.

- ☐ #2.....6.00
- ☐ #3.....6.00

ENTERPRISE INCIDENTS

- ☐ Special 1.....5.00
- ☐ Special 2.....5.00
- ☐ Special 3.....5.00
- ☐ Special 4.....6.00
- ☐ Special 5.....6.00
- ☐ Special 6.....6.00
- ☐ 9.....15.00
- ☐ 10.....12.00
- ☐ 11.....10.00
- ☐ 12.....10.00
- ☐ Summer.....10.00
- ☐ 14.....8.00
- ☐ 15.....8.00
- ☐ 16.....8.00
- ☐ 17.....8.00
- ☐ 18.....8.00
- ☐ 19.....5.00
- ☐ 21.....5.00
- ☐ 22.....5.00
- ☐ 23.....5.00
- ☐ 24.....5.00
- ☐ 25.....5.00
- ☐ 26.....5.00
- ☐ 27.....5.00
- ☐ 28.....5.00
- ☐ 29.....5.00
- ☐ 30.....5.00
- ☐ 31.....4.00
- ☐ 32.....4.00
- ☐ 33.....4.00
- ☐ 34.....4.00
- ☐ 35.....4.00

COMICS FEATURE

- ☐ 28.....7.00
- ☐ 29.....6.00
- ☐ 30.....5.00
- ☐ 31.....5.00
- ☐ #33.....5.00
- ☐ #37.....5.00
- ☐ #38.....5.00
- ☐ #39.....4.00
- ☐ #40(Jan).....4.00
- ☐ #40(Feb).....4.00
- ☐ #41.....4.00
- ☐ #42.....4.00
- ☐ #43.....6.00

BACKLIST

ENTERPRISE

- ☐ #1.....10.00
- ☐ #2.....5.00
- ☐ #3.....5.00
- ☐ #5.....5.00
- ☐ #9.....5.00
- ☐ #10.....5.00
- ☐ #11.....5.00

THE COUPON COUPON: Please check all items desired and total the amounts. Then write a check, o.k.? Hey! Don't forget to clip out the section with the items checked and send it along—so we know what to send back!

All items postpaid. Do not send cash. All payments must be made in U.S. funds.

MPS

8399 Topanga Canyon Boulevard
Suite 210
Canoga Park, CA 91304

Name_____
Address_____
City, State, Zip_____
Total cost of order

FOREIGN AND CANADIAN ORDERS MUST ADD $1.00 SHIPPING PER ITEM ORDERED. WE SINCERELY APOLOGIZE FOR THIS BUT UNFORTUNATELY YOUR POST OFFICE WILL NOT HONOR UNITED STATES BULK MAIL PERMITS!

8 to 12 weeks for delivery.

BEFORE SILVER AGE

WEIRD FANTASY

BY JAMES VAN HISE

The science fiction comic was by no means a new thing in 1950, but Bill Gaines and Al Feldstein at E.C. Comics did their level best to make theirs different.

In 1950, **Planet Comics** was in its tenth year, although unlike EC, it featured series adventures as well as unrelated stories. **Startling Comics** and **Wonder Comics** were largely heroic adventure with some SF thrown in, but they had folded in 1948 after an 8 year run. Many titles folded at the end of the first heroic age of comics.

By 1950, the trend was crime and horror, westerns and funny animals. Such books dominated what would become a marketplace swelled with literally hundreds of titles. Into this milieu came Bill Gaines, a publisher who had recently inherited his father's company when M. C. "Max" Gaines, an entrepreneur who had helped bring comic books into being in the Thirties, was killed in a boating accident.

Bill found himself with a company selling such titles as **A Moon, A Girl ... Romance** and **Picture Stories From The Bible.** By no means hot items in the new comics market of 1950. Sweeping the slate clean, he changed **International Comics** into **Crime Patrol** which became **Crypt of Terror** and finally **Tales from the Crypt** while **A Moon, A Girl...Romance** became **Weird Fantasy!** (To try to avoid confusion, I should point out that **Weird Fantasy** began with issue 13 due to its continuing numbering of a previous title, but with the sixth issue reverted to the correct numbering. This whole mess had to do with complicated postal regulations involving deposits required when a new title was established. Gaines tried, sometimes successfully, to avoid the hassles).

Although Gaines and his editor-in-chief, Al Feldstein, worked up most of the plots, Feldstein did most of the writing during the early years of the title. (Some stories were written by people such as Wally Wood and Gardner Fox over the course of the first few issues.)

An already familiar name involved at the beginning of E.C. Comics science fiction enterprise was Harry Harrison (popular SF writer and creator of the Stainless Steel Rat and the Deathworld series of novels). At that time, Harrison wasn't doing much writing and was in fact working as a comic book artist teaming up with the young Wally Wood. In a 1973 interview in **Graphic Story Magazine,** Harrison recalled the genesis of EC's science fiction, and how it was he and Wood who convinced Gaines to give SF a try.

"I was always a science fiction fan, and Wally was interested in science fiction, too. I gave Gaines a lot of it to read. We just wanted to do a science fiction comic, since there was none of that kind at all at the time," said Harrison, meaning that comic book SF was rather thin and juvenile compared to what was being published in the novels and pulp magazines. "Finally he took a flyer at it."

Although Harrison wasn't wild about Gaines putting the word **Weird** in the title of his SF books, the comics did present a mix of stories which were the closest the medium had yet come to what was being done in the magazines. Within a couple years it would come closer still.

Gaines launched two titles, **Weird Fantasy,** and a month later, **Weird Science.** Although different books, they employed the same staff and were pretty much interchangeable. Nonetheless, they are worth examining individually. (**Weird Science** will be dealt with another time).

EERIE-SCIENCE SUSPENSTORIES!

For the first few issues, **Weird Fantasy** was obviously trying to find itself, searching for the kind of story which would work best. Although later issues would feature violent, gut-wrenching tales, at first things were pretty tame. In the first issue, only the cover story, "Am I Man Or Machine?" truly hits the mark. It deals with a man whose brain is preserved after his death who returns to see his wife two years later after a realistic artificial body is made for him. In the end, he realizes that he can't go home again,

E.C. established a rapport with its readers much as fans later experienced with Marvel Comics. Artists, writers and editors were not anonymous — and in fact were written up and even appeared in stories! In "Cosmic Ray Bomb Explosion" (in the second issue of **Weird Fantasy**), Gaines and Feldstein are the main characters who get hauled in by the F.B.I. for publishing a story about a cosmic ray bomb. Drawn by Al Feldstien, it showed comics from a point of view fans were unfamiliar with up until that time. These guys were obviously having fun and wanted *you* to join in! Issue two also features H.P. Lovecraft's fictional mystic tome, the Necronomicon, in a *horror* story (*not* sf) titled "The Black Arts," written and drawn by Harry Harrison.

It was uncommon in comics back then for artists to write the stories they drew, but E.C. gave such opportunities to their talent from time to time. Harvey Kurtzman wrote and drew SF, horror and war stories in various books including "Henry and his Goon Child" in **Weird Fantasy** 3. He also wrote Wood's "Dark Side of the Moon" for the same issue. The latter is about an alien invasion of Earth which ends with the moon being blown up!

A humorous and oddly prophetic story appears in the fourth issue. Harvey Kurtzman's "The Mysterious Ray From Another Dimension!" tells of the world of 1970 where everyone has a television. It's discovered that after watching tv for 20 years, people start to fade out due to a mysterious ray emanating from the screens.

In the fifth issue, EC started establishing what would quickly become the prevailing tone. SF stories would be grim, established in an atmosphere of dread, much as with their horror tales. And, of course, there would be the inevitable O. Henry style twist ending. In "Child of Tomorrow," mankind dies off after an atomic war to be replaced by hideous mutants, except for one lone human survivor who shoots a vicious killer mutant who is then revealed to be his only child. In "Deadlock" written and drawn by Wood, an alien and a Terran spacecraft encounter one another in space only to realize that they must destroy each other for fear of being followed back to their home world. In the final story, the Earth is destroyed when our sun goes nova. **Weird Fantasy** had become a science fiction horror comic!

Issue six actually had one story with a happy ending. But the pattern of shocking sci-fi had set in. This was a conscious effort on the part of the EC staff reacting as others ran only outer space westerns. Reacting to that, their stories usually set the hero up for a fall. But they had fun with their stories and the artists were enthusiastic. Although Wally Wood was working for a number of companies, his best art was always done for EC. Instead of doing one more take-off on Flash Gordon, they were exploring the dark side of science fiction.

ABOVE AND BELOW ARE CLASSIC PANELS BY WALLY WOOD, THE ONE AT BOTTOM IS FROM "THE MUTANT".

THE PANEL ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE IS THE VERY UNIQUE WORK OF AL FELDSTEIN, A VERY CLEAN STYLE INDEED!

MONSTER MANIA

With issue seven, EC started bringing monsters into their stories. Wood proved himself to be Mr. Monster himself with the ockey, tentacled monstrosities he rendered at the conclusion of "Breakdown." He demonstrated even more monstrous enthusiasm in "Enemies of the Colony" in issue 8.

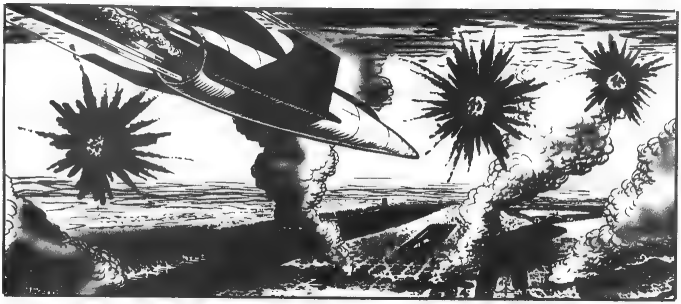
The golden age of **Weird Fantasy** began with issue 9 when the stories became as strong as the art. "Spawn of Mars," drawn by Wood, shows EC being influenced not just by print SF but also by the dramatic structure of film. This 8 page mini-drama reads like a motion picture as it tells of an expedition to Mars — and what came back to Earth with them! "A Mistake in Multiplication" drawn by Joe Orlando in the same issue, has much the same impact, but with more monsters. And they're the weirdest-looking critters this side of the 1982 version of **The Thing!**

Weird Fantasy 10 has always held a special place for me because it was the first E.C. comic I ever read. Picked up in the back issue bins, it was quite a revelation. It was a color comic with stories as strong as those which had been appearing in the early years of the Archie Goodwin edited B&W magazines, **Creepy** and **Eerie**. "The Secret of Saturn's Ring!" is a creepy monster story which never lets up, and it showcased another stride forward in the art of Wally Wood, It was amazing to see his work improve every issue. "The Mutant" began the tradition of Wally Wood having two stories in each issue of **Weird Fantasy**. It also began E.C.'s use of a serious undercurrent in some of their SF fables, a facet more commonly used in their sister title, **Shock Suspenstories**. "The Mutants" dealt with a large number of genetic freaks being born who, despite their horrible appearance, were nonetheless human and intelligent. When bigotry forced their exile into space, the heroic sacrifice of one of the shiploads of mutants demonstrated their humanity. The rest were welcomed back to earth — until bigotry flared up again. It was stories such as these that pushed the E.C. science fiction comics closer to equalling the best of the SF magazines than any comics had before.

E.C. presented a real mix of stories in their books. Although they didn't indulge in the Buck Rogers style of space opera, they did explore many other plots. Stories dealing with serious human concerns didn't predominate at E.C., but it is those stories which have the most impact and are most readily recalled by fans, decades later. The fact that E.C. tried such stories at all made them unique in the first 30 years of comic book history. These stories are still as fresh today as they were in the 1950s.

Writer/editor Al Feldstein was a triple-threat in those days as he also was an artist. He drew stories for the earliest issues but then began only doing covers when writing pressures became too great. One of his last **Weird Fantasy** covers, on issue 11, was of a spaceship scene as most of his SF covers prominently feature spaceships and planetary scenes, with only a rare monster. This one is different though, as it shows Manhattan Island with an atomic bomb crater. The cover is rendered in homage to very similar paintings done by Chesley Bonestell for **Collier's** magazine and elsewhere in 1948 & 1950. In fact, Feldstein actually closely copied a 1947 Bonestell painting of New York after a meteor strike and made it look like an atomic attack. The cover more-or-less ties in with one of the Wood-illustrated stories in that issue, "The 10th At Noon," which deals with a camera which can photograph near future events.

Issue 12 was different. None of the stories had downbeat endings and, in fact, two of them were humorous.



THE RAY BRADBURY CONNECTION

Under the pressure of coming up with stories month after month for their horror and science fiction titles, Gaines and Feldstein sometimes "borrowed" from previously published work. "A Timely Shock" in **WF** 10 borrows elements of Fritz Leiber's "Nice Girl With Five Husbands." "The Thing In The Jar" in 11 parallels Ralph Milne Farley's "Liquid Life," and there are other examples. But in **Weird Fantasy** 13, they borrowed from a young, up-and-coming writer named Ray Bradbury — and got caught!

"Home To Stay" in the May-June 1952 issue (WF 13), ranks as perhaps their best written story published up until that time in the title. And little wonder! The tale is a skillful reworking of Ray Bradbury's "The Rocket Man" and "Kaleidoscope." The fusion uses the best of both stories to produce a subtle, yet powerful, fable of a man who loves going out in space so much that he's willing to leave his family for up to 3 years at a time when he goes off on his job. The relationship between the man and his son whom he sees only every 3 years is touchingly rendered. Even his own yearning for space is portrayed as being an intimate part of the man, neither positive nor negative. The ending is quite moving, a twist which isn't forced to fit the story, as some less successful conclusions were.

By now, Joe Orlando was really coming into his own, and "Don't Count Your Chickens..." has a monster in it as hair-raising as anything ever seen in the movies. The story is reminiscent of many films of the Fifties. Although Orlando had been an asistant of Wally Wood, he quickly developed his own look, a detailed rendering style.

Wood hit his stride at E.C. with "The Exile!" in **WF** 14. The story has a predictable conclusion, but the art is first rate. Wood began doing only one story per issue because he was also now a regular in the EC war comics.

Weird Fantasy 14 also marked the debut of Al Williamson in E.C.'s science fiction comics. The story, "Mad Journey," has a conclusion borrowed from a story in Bradbury's **The Martian Chronicles** wherein a traveller to Mars is placed in a Martian looney bin with others claiming to be from the Earth. This was Williamson's second job for E.C. The first was "The Thing In The Glades" (**Tales from the Crypt** 31), a script which he chose over "Mad Journey" because it seemed easier to draw. When he brought the completed work in, "Mad Journey" was still there and, needing the work, he took it.

"And of course then I got chicken on some of the stuff and I had Frank (Frazetta) ink some of it," Williamson recalls. "I was always afraid that I would screw up my pencilling with the inking and it wouldn't be good enough. Roy (Krenkel) worked on that, too. As a rule, all the city stuff in my strips back then was done by Roy."

Wood is absent from issue 15 but Williamson is present in three stories — two short-shorts and his classic "By George!". The latter concerns an alien being who is stranded on Earth and ends up as one of our legends.

"On 'By George' I did all that myself except for a couple of faces at the beginning and the end that were inked by Jack Hearn," Williamson states. "George Evans is sometimes mistakenly credited as having inked those faces. I used a lot of Craftint and Benday in there, plus I was studying Hal Foster's work when I was inking the strip. I worked real strange. I could do one story real well and the next one would look lousy. It was real depressing. I never knew how one was going to turn out."

"The Long Trip" in **WF** 15 was taken from A.E. Van Vogt's "Far Centaurus," although uncredited.

By the time **WF** 16 was published, EC had come to terms with Ray Bradbury. When a fan sent Bradbury a note revealing the "adaptation" in issue 13, Bradbury sent EC a letter. In it he reminded them that they had overlooked paying him for the adaptation and to please be sure not to leave his name off the story in the future. Gaines immediately sent a check by return mail and asked if they could do more adaptations, this time officially. The "Cosmic Correspondence" (the letters column, another rarity for comics in the early Fifties) announced that: "Home to Stay" was the first...a sort of test! We were overwhelmed at its reception! That reception included letters from fans who recognized the source of the story. They would adapt a total of 28 Bradbury stories, another first which has yet to be equalled by any other publisher of comics.

WF 17 features their official adaptation of Bradbury's "there will come soft rains..." drawn by Wally Wood. A story without a human character, with only minimal dialogue from a computer overseeing the functions of an automated house, it is a tour de force. The tale eminently demonstrates what science fiction can do that other forms of literature cannot, and the adaptation serves as a stunning tribute to what EC was attempting to do to broaden the boundaries of the comic book form. In the letters of comment published on that issue, fans either loved or hated the fable, depending on whether they understood it. One fan, noting that EC seemed to be trying different stories and approaches asked, "But lately, what has happened to those horrible monsters which you brought into every story so cleverly at the end? Just a few more monsters in your stories will keep you on top in my opinion."

As much as E.C. did to broaden the form, they also fell back on formula a bit too often. While their Ray Bradbury adaptations showed where mainstream science fiction was, they also ran stories which in no way, shape or form reflected what science fiction writers were trying to do. These had plots which hinged on formula love triangles where the lead character would knock off his lover's husband so that they could be together, as well as profit by it. **Weird Fantasy** 18 is an example of the best and the worst of the EC SF stories. The issue features "Zero Hour," a Ray Bradbury shocker about invaders using children to gain a beachhead on Earth.

THE INTERESTED READER SHOULD BE AWARE THAT AN EXCELLENT SET OF REPRINTS OF EC COMICS IS AVAILABLE FROM: Russ Cochran, Box 2286, Scottsdale, AZ 85252.

On the other hand, "Judgement Day!," drawn by Joe Orlando for the same issue, is much truer to magazine SF. It's a parable about racism involving a man from Earth encountering a society of orange robots and blue robots. The letters column of **WF** 20 was completely devoted to this story, but besides the praise and a request for copies from a school, two letters stood out as the most interesting. The first (from "name withheld by request" in Augusta, Georgia) states: "I am not prejudiced, so I was not offended by 'Judgement Day,' but some of my best friends were. They even went so far as to say, 'Those D--- N---- Lovers.' The North and South are like they are, so why not leave well enough alone!" But Ray Bradbury also wrote in to state: "I realize you have been battling, in the sea of comics, to try to do better things. You have certainly succeeded in JUDGEMENT DAY, which should be required reading for every man, woman and child in the United States. You've done a splendid thing here, and deserve the highest commendation."

It's said that science fiction is any story which deals with the impact of technology on man. Never has this been more eloquently explored in a way both quiet and powerful than in Bradbury's "King of the Grey Spaces!" (A short story now titled "R Is For Rocket" in anthologies). Drawn by John Severin and Will Elder for **WF** 19, a banner on the cover proclaims — "In This Issue: E.C.'s Adaptation of a story by RAY BRADBURY America's Top Science-Fiction Writer!" In a letter reacting to this story about two boys yearning to go to the stars, one writer observed, "Never did a s-f story move me so much nor hit home so hard."

The impact of Bradbury on E.C. was felt in other ways. Al Feldstein, for instance, became more and more influenced by Ray Bradbury's style of writing. This is certainly most evident in "Brain Child" in **WF** 19, a story expertly rendered by Williamson and told from the point of view of a rocket, just as Bradbury's own "I, Rocket" is in **WF** 20. It also demonstrated that Feldstein had become more concerned with weaving subtle underpinings of feeling into his stories, which made them stronger.

The lead story in **WF** 20, "...For Us the Living," is one of the best in the series as it deals with a man who invents a time machine so that he can meet Abraham Lincoln. He accidently causes Lincoln's assassination, thereby changing history so that Lincoln was not able to go on to unite the world in peace. It's a disturbing twist on a familiar idea.

WF 21 features "Saved," a story about a vampire in space which Williamson didn't want to draw — and it shows. Besides more stories of bizarre betrayal, this issue also features a fine adaptation of Bradbury's "The Million Year Picnic," taken from the final chapter of **The Martian Chronicles**.

Another Martian Chronicle appears in **WF 22**, "The Silent Towns." It's a humorous story about a man who finds himself alone on Mars, and who is less than thrilled with the last woman on Mars. It's extremely well rendered by Reed Crandall as he captures the sly and subtle facial expressions of the two characters, something not generally attempted by comics artists. The other stories are nothing special, outside of "Derelict Ship," drawn by Bernie Krigstein. Krigstein was not just one of the E.C.'s most unusual artists, but one of the most unusual artists ever to grace comic books. He tried for different techniques and effects and fought against E.C.'s rigid panel structure, often with success. While not as innovative as some of his other stories, his closeup of the villain's open mouth on page 5 and the repeating of this motif in an odd montage on page 6 show that he wanted to do different things within the confines of the comic book page. The story of self-sacrifice is better than average.

Weird Fantasy was cancelled with issue 22 and combined with **Weird Science** into **Weird Science-Fantasy**. The forays into science fiction in that title is yet another story, for another time.

EC's science fiction comics displayed a love and care for the form not previously witnessed on the four-color page. While well-crafted stories were seen occasionally before this, never had a publisher consistently attempted to explore every facet of what could be done with science fiction in comics the way E.C. did. This focus on **Weird Fantasy** is only one facet of the E.C. science fiction experience. The overall picture is really only seen when examining their other titles, **Weird Science**, **Weird Science-Fantasy** and **Incredible Science Fiction** as well. The impact of what they attempted is still felt today. Their successes are a high watermark others have continually aimed for, their adaptations of Ray Bradbury some of the finest attempts at welding literature with comics. **CF**

JAMES VAN HISE, A CONTRIBUTING EDITOR OF COMICS FEATURE, IS THE AUTHOR OF THE ART OF AL WILLIAMSON, CONSIDERED A CLASSIC IN THE FIELD. HE IS FORMER EDITOR OF ONE OF THE OLDEST PUBLICATIONS ABOUT COMIC BOOKS AND HAS CONTRIBUTED TO VIRTUALLY EVERY MAJOR PUBLICATION IN THE FIELD.

© 1986 D.C. Comics

COMICS FEATURE

Subscribe TODAY

Comic books, animation, newspaper strips, superhero role-playing games—Like no other magazine, COMICS FEATURE covers it all. Written exclusively by professionals, printed on the best paper and loaded with full, vibrant color, COMICS FEATURE is truly unique. COMICS FEATURE is the only magazine that's universally trusted by the creators, publishers and producers of comic and animation art to accurately and fairly report on their activities.

Movie Publishers Services, Inc. Suite 208 8399 Topanga Canyon Blvd. Canoga Park, CA 91304

Please send me 9 issues of **COMICS FEATURE** for the ridiculously low price of $15.95, $24.95 in Canada, and $24.95 foreign.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZIP _____

Please pay by check or money order—do not send cash! (Please allow checks to clear our bank)

MPS
MOVIE PUBLISHERS SERVICES INC.

ALLOW 8 TO 10 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY